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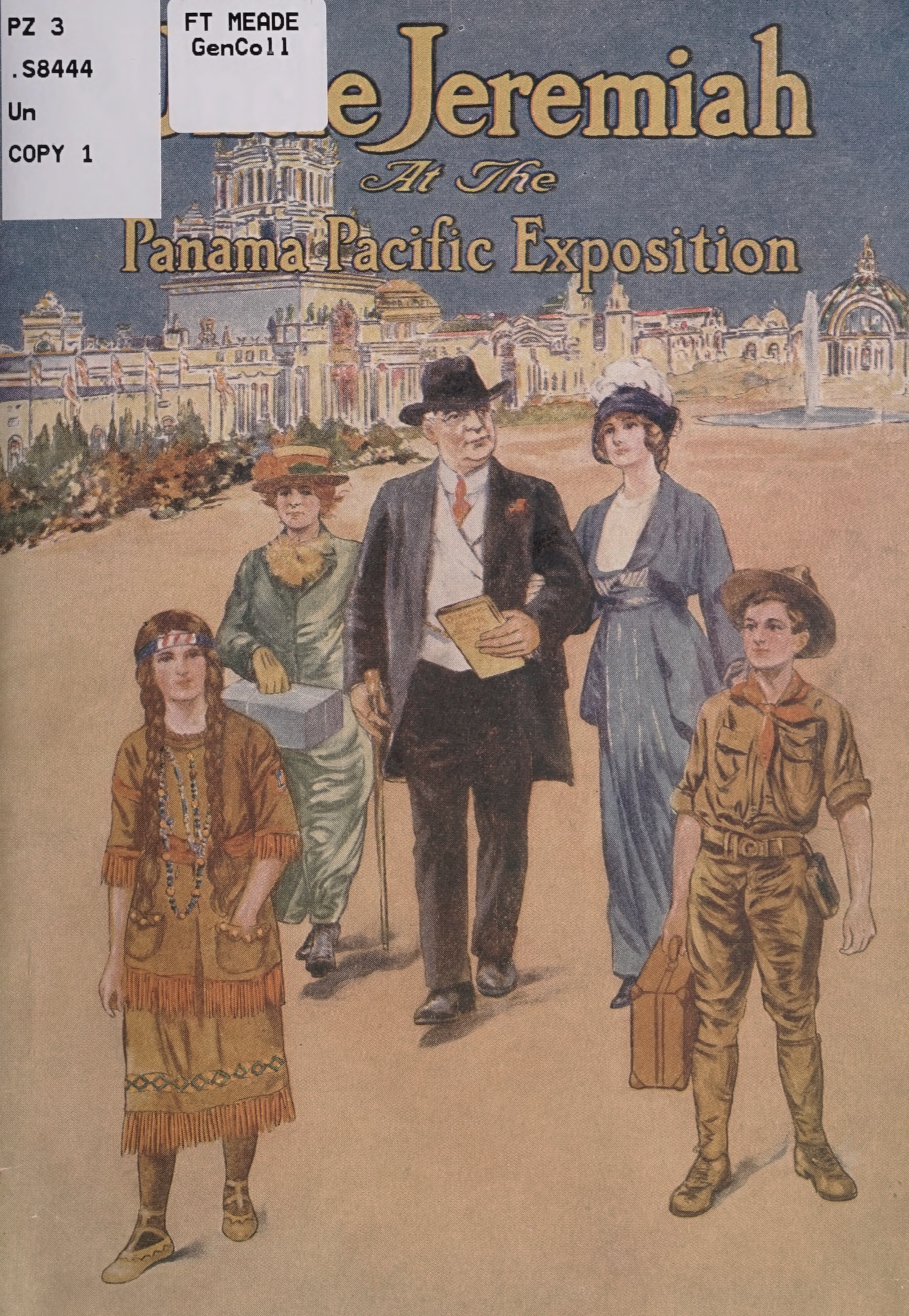
At The

Panama Pacific Exposition



Uncle Jeremiah *at the* Panama-Pacific Exposition

Strange, Startling and Amazing Adventures *of the* Famous Farmer Philosopher *and* His Friends Amid *the* Gorgeous Scenes *at the* Golden Gate.

by C. M. STEVENS, Ph. D.

Author of

Uncle Jeremiah at the World's Columbian Exposition, etc., etc.

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

TO the many thousands of Americans, young and old, who have enjoyed the stories of Uncle Jeremiah's experiences at the World's Columbian Exposition and elsewhere, this interesting old philosopher from the farm needs no introduction. In this volume we find the dear old fellow once more presented in the role of a cheerful friend of humanity, and the strange and amusing adventures of Uncle Jeremiah and his party at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition are described in a similar vein of abundant humor to that successfully employed by the author heretofore.

In Pickup, the boy scout, and Paquita, the campfire girl, two very interesting characters are presented that have already met with wide approval; and the story of their further experiences has been related by the author in other volumes, which will be welcomed by their numerous friends.

One cannot read of Uncle Jeremiah without coming to love him. And it is a matter of pride for all patriotic Americans that this truly lovable character is typically American. There are Uncle Jeremiahs in every community —brimful of brotherly love and of that joyous sense of humor which makes life worth living.

I.

PROSPERITY REQUIRES VARIETY.

Uncle Jeremiah drove his touring car up the private driveway opposite the yard gate and settled back in his seat for a highly contented survey of the pleasing scene.

"Peace hath her victories and prosperity her charms," he mused, "but it gets monotonous. Self-preservation is the first law of happiness, but variety is the spice of life. Several other sayings could be quoted to show that I've got to have a change."

He heaved a sigh as he looked around over the comfortable homestead and the well stocked farm.

"Something's got to happen," he soliloquized. "I am beginning to feel as contented as a mummy. I am drying up with satisfaction like a bone in the sun."

A shout from the rose arbor in the front yard broke into his reverie.

"Discovered," he exclaimed. "I can't get into any picture around here without the Great Artist proceeding to beautify it by putting in some finer pieces of human life. Here she comes."

A young woman appeared skipping

through the gate and around the car. She jumped upon the step and threw her arms around the old man's neck.

"There, now, that'll do for this installment," he responded. "I surrender uncon-

ditionally. What new tribute must I pay to the joy of living?"

"Frank has come," she whispered in his ear. "He was graduated in the same class

with me. He was the all-around athletic champion for two years. He is on his way to the Panama-Pacific Exposition to be captain of a company of Exposition guards. He

wants some experience in the wild and woolly west before finishing his course in law."

"Why, girl," exclaimed her grandfather, "what on earth are you talking about? Put a head on your extraordinary outburst of de-

scription. Put a title on your story. Write an introduction. Announce the forthcoming production. Who is this wonderful 'he' you are exploiting as the hero of your romance?"

She stopped his utterance with her hand over his mouth. A young man came into view from the direction of the rose trees. He walked on around from behind her and stood expectantly at the front wheel.

"Grandfather," she said in introduction, "this is Mr. Frank Mulford, a classmate, who has stopped off between trains on his way to San Francisco. Mr. Mulford, this is my grandfather, whom everybody calls Uncle Jeremiah. If he has any other name, I hear it so infrequently that it would be unfashionable to use it, even if I knew for sure what it is."

The two men shook hands very cordially in the presence of such a medium of social union.

Mr. Mulford was rather a hopeful-looking young man to the knowing eyes of Uncle Jeremiah. The old man could find no blemish through which to survey the youth before him, though there was no time for any satisfying appraisement.

"I am sorry my visit must be so short," said Mulford, "but I see the trolley car coming, and I must take this one in order to get

my train. I am hoping to see you at the Exposition."

Thus excusing so brief an interview, the two young folks turned back through the gate toward the nearest point to reach the trolley car. Uncle Jeremiah watched Merrilee tripping along the walk with him down the long yard to the front gate and across the lawn to the car track.

"So this is the change I was asking for?" he questioned. "I wanted variety and here it is. Now I can have something lovely to worry about. I'll have about as much effect on it as a fan in the bleachers worrying over his favorite batter making a run for home base. It will exercise my thoughts about as efficiently as they act on the problems of the great war. I'll philosophize. Let me see. Courtship has for its trainers either the frivolous or the important. The contributing spectators are of every kind. The game is played between the goals of the ridiculous and the sublime. Those who lose win the ridiculous and those who win lose the sublime."

The philosophical musing was interrupted. The rural route postman arrived, just as Merrilee was parting with her friend, and gave her a letter. Seeing Uncle Jeremiah at the side gate, he rode on up and also gave him a

letter. A glance at the envelope showed that it came from a recent benevolent enterprise in which he had ventured to experiment. Its postmark was that of the county seat some fifteen or twenty miles away. He opened it and read it with an expression of complacent satisfaction.

"Dear Uncle Jeremiah:

"Our Pioneer Camp votes you their thanks for the hundred dollars divided into four checks which you gave to the Boy Scouts. We will send a boy with it to the Exposition to see what he can achieve according to his creed. He is to write out a report of his experiences for the benefit of his comrades. We will send you a copy so you can estimate the value of your benevolence to the cause of boy-manhood.

"Responsibility is the magic word when it is made alive with interest. The boy who toils and suffers and sacrifices through one real life task is ever after that experience a man.

"A normal boy will always find such a life task if he has the moral freedom in which to find it. The life problem is always ready for the boy. We must supply the means and the way.

"Your contribution gives us the means for a typical "try-out" on this theory of the social

way. Let us learn a lesson from the results of this case. Our boy will succeed.

"Respectfully,

"Secretary of Boy Scouts,

"Pioneer Camp."

"Money well spent," he commented. "Some boy will come back from that mission worth several hundred dollars more to himself, his community and to humanity. I guess it's a paying investment."

He was interrupted by news from a very enthusiastic and vivacious intruder.

"Listen here," exclaimed Merrilee, perching herself upon the running footboard at his side. "I have an invitation from Aunt Lottie to spend the summer with them at their ranch in Arizona. Listen to this splendid letter:

" 'Dear Merrilee:

" 'Paquita will soon be fourteen. She has grown up wild on the ranch since her mother's death. Her father is away on a prospecting tour and has not been heard of for three months. She belongs to a camp-fire bunch and is determined to go with them to the World's Fair. She has the Spanish love for adventure in her veins. I don't know what to do with my willful granddaughter unless you go to the fair as her manager and come

back here with her for the Summer. She must be cured of such overabundant independence. She must be brought under reasonable restraint. I recommend the Green Tree Hotel at San Francisco. Can't you meet her there and help her to learn that she is becoming a woman?

"'Anxiously,

"'Aunt Lottie Havron.'

"What do you think of that?" exclaimed Merrilee, seeing a vision of ranches, expositions and the captain of guards all in one swirling panorama.

"I think that the war of invasion and conquest is now on," he replied. "All peace negotiations will prove futile. The mobilization of forces is now the order of the day. Pay me the bonus, guarantee reasonable peace for me and you can march across my neutral territory."

"Mercy on us!" cried the girl in alarm. "You don't think this is war, do you, daddy?"

"Of course it is," explained Uncle Jeremiah. "Don't we leave these peaceful surroundings and break through the center of environment in order to capture the glory of distant scenes, perhaps with a captain thrown in as a trophy of war?"

"Oh! oh! I understand," she laughed. "Now that the verbal cannonading has ceased, we can proceed to take the forts."

"Very good," he replied. "There is nothing like promptness and readiness. We can leave here next Monday morning and spend a week or two sight seeing on the way. Now to your guns. Give no quarter to the figures of speech."

"Good old granddad," she cooed, patting him affectionately on the cheek. "You are so easy. It is almost a shame to take the spoils. But I've just got to go. I have never seen Cousin Paquita and I like her description. We'll help tame each other. Before we bid each other goodby she will be a charmingly fashionable young woman."

The squawk of a chicken and the frantic flutter of wings around the automobile startled them. The bustling form of their little Scotch housewoman, who had been with them from time immemorial, came gyrating into view around the machine. She and her Scotch collie were making alternate grabs at a fluffy bantam rooster that alternately fought and flew.

"I told that gypsy clarewant that it was more than her fortune-telling was worth to try to catch a bantam rooster," explained Molly, between gasps for breath, as the

chicken made clear its escape. "Anyhow, I've done my duty, and the angels can't do no more."

She waved her hand and shook her head at the gypsy woman, whom they could see standing irresolutely at the front gate.

"It didn't cost her nothing to tell me that I was about to go on a long journey," she continued, "and, after many exciting adventures, would see my husband. Besides, it wasn't very satisfying. All she could see of him was that he wore a broad-brimmed hat, a ruffled shirt and low wool socks. That was

mighty slight information to be equal to a bantam rooster. She thought it was a fine bird. I said I'd get it if I could, but I couldn't and I knew I couldn't. But think of it. Before she would tell me a word, I had to guarantee that the bird laid fresh eggs, but I didn't commit myself any further than to guarantee that all the eggs it laid would be fresh."

Molly went off into a long cackle of appropriate laughter.

"I said we didn't want to part with our best birds, especially not ones with such beautiful foliage. But it was banty or nothing with her before she would take a single look at my hand. Anyhow she couldn't foresee that I couldn't catch that bantam. I guess there ain't much more truth in us going off on a long journey than there is in me seeing the right man by three such signs."

"You are going to take a long journey to the house and get a hungry man a good lunch," replied Uncle Jeremiah. "I don't ask any pay for that clairvoyance."

The disappointed gypsy woman left the gate with a backward look as if she were throwing dire confusion into her prophecy for the ungrateful Molly, and went on to her companions waiting for her down the highway.

Molly paused a moment during the process of bringing down her highflown ideas to the more humble fulfillment of the more practical prophecy of her boss.

"I'll need Molly to go with me to the Exposition for my caretaker and chaperon," suggested Merrilee.

Molly's ideas again rose in the air like a flock of wild geese, but she gathered herself together for common things and turned toward the house to obey her master.

As she went on through the gate, a faithful fellow, who presided over the affairs of the stable, stepped out from behind the gatepost and walked affectionately along by her side. He was one of the last of the ancient caricatures known as the country rube. According to an obsolescent vocabulary, he was a cross between a hayseed and a clodhopper, and likewise far from being a weakling or a fool.

"You ain't going to leave the farm, air ye, Molly?" he inquired disconsolately.

"Not if I can't git away, you may be sure of that, Mr. Abner Bean," she replied testily, "but don't you be thinking that I'm staying because I'm any crazy about you. My man's going to have a better job than taking care of a stable. You heard what the gypsy

woman foretold and you heard what Merrilee said."

"I can foretell just as well as the gypsy," Ab insisted, "and I foretell that if you go to San Frisky to follow up what she foretold, I'll sell my roan colt and foller around to see about it. I'll plague them fellers of yours to the end of the earth, plague take it!"

Molly was flattered and exasperated. The latter mood prevailed and she gave him such a dig in the ribs with her elbow that he doubled up among the thorns in a near-by rose bush, from which he extricated himself with much difficulty and wounded dignity.

Merrilee laughed at the spectacle.

"If absence doesn't help Ab's sense any," she thoughtfully asserted, "and if it makes his heart grow fonder, you'll have to interfere or insist on a clergyman."

"Anyway," she continued, "Molly is a faithful servant. I'll have to take her along as general utility maid, with the title, according to the case, of caretaker or chaperon, I will then be quite well prepared for sight-seeing, with you as overseer, cashier, and chief adviser of events."

She gave Uncle Jeremiah a pat and a smack and went skipping up the walk to her room to write numerous enthusiastic letters, and the old man, seeing the deluge of change

now confronting him, urged his machine with some inconsiderate vehemence on into the shed.

The few days of preparation fled swiftly and brought the morning when Abner hauled sadly to the station a trunk packed for two and a huge suit case sufficient for the toilet of Uncle Jeremiah. The three travelers took the trolley line and arrived in ample time to take the train, and also for Uncle Jeremiah to rehearse to Abner the instructions necessary for the artistic management of affairs in the absence of the boss.

Abner tried hard to get in some kind of an affectionate goodby to Molly, but she had larger visions and Ab no longer looked good to her.

But Abner was evidently descended from some ancient conqueror. He would not see such magnificent goods as Molly get away from him like that.

He drove back home pondering so effectively that he hastily turned his instructions over to another farm hand, bestrode his roan filly and rode back to the livery stable of the town. In a few minutes, he had a roll of money in his pocket, and his beloved horse belonged to another man.

Abner did not know much about travel, but he had seen passengers, of a rather undigni-

fied sort, to be sure, getting into box cars for distant points of interest, and he knew he could do the same.

The freight train was just starting in the direction he wanted to go, and when it pulled out of town, Abner was on board, fully determined to enter the scenes, to have his say concerning the show, and to share heroically in the fortunes of family adventures.

II.

STARTING THINGS ALONG THE WAY.

Uncle Jeremiah had just left Merrilee to finish her late noon lunch in the dining car when a boy of perhaps fifteen came in and took a place opposite to her. With the con-

fident assurance given by youth, he ventured to ask her assistance toward mastering the unaccustomed bill of fare, and with the reciprocal joy of youthful service, she helped him and liked him. Though she was soon ready to return to her car, by that time she had

learned that he was a boy scout on his way to the Exposition, and also she had cordially issued an invitation for him to come back to the observation platform and enjoy the scenery with her. He had promptly accepted with a warm glow of appreciation for the delightful privilege conferred.

The invitation was indeed so alluring that his luncheon was very rapidly swallowed and he got to the back platform before his fair friend arrived. The train at this time had stopped at a watering station which afforded a picturesque view of the great mountain ridges. Just as it began to move away, a man came climbing up the grade and caught hold of the gate in an effort to climb over upon the car platform. The boy ran across to help him, but he had not yet got a firm hold when the car came over an open culvert and the man went down. Horrified at the sudden catastrophe, the boy leaned far over the railing. There was a brief vision of the stranger hanging helplessly to a beam and struggling to escape the long fall to the shallow stream below.

A flash of consciousness broke over the boy's mind at the suggestion that here was an imperative call to duty. The train had not yet begun to gather speed. Climbing down over the railing he looked for a clear space to

jump. He was so sure of doing the right thing that he never paused, and in a moment more was rolling down the bank.

Though stunned for a few moments by the fall he soon came to full consciousness of the situation and ran around into the culvert, where he found the man lying unconscious in the stream, in much danger of being speedily drowned, even if his fall was not already fatal.

The boy dragged the man out upon the bank, and with his knowledge of first aid to the wounded, soon had the unfortunate fellow restored to consciousness. Fortunately, the stream of water had relieved his fall enough so that there were no broken bones, though the concussion of his head left him dazed and half out of his mind.

Meanwhile, when Merrilee came back to the platform she found no one in the observation part of the car. The boy did not come and she became absorbed in a magazine she found upon the library desk.

The mysterious young man in the story she read was about to propose to the infatuated daughter of the millionaire, when Molly came in. With the motion of the train turning a curve, she staggered about the car and finally landed in a heap across the knees of an elder-

ly gentleman as she attempted to make goal in an adjoining chair.

"What's the matter with you, Molly?" asked Merrilee in some embarrassment, as she got her unsteady caretaker off of the man into a seat.

"I don't seem to hit the floor just right with my feet," she replied, "and besides, as we go along round these mountains just a-skimming over the treetops, I don't feel like letting down all my weight, so I don't seem to stick to the carpet sometimes."

Suddenly she remembered her errand.

"Uncle Jeremiah says we are to get off at the next station and browse around among the scenery till this train comes by again to-morrow. Him and a man want to go out in the morning for a look at some of these grand cannons and mountain gouges."

"I'll be glad," she added, as if extended explanations were needed, "to sleep once more on terribly firmer, as the Latin would say. All the time I'm asleep on that train shelf, it is just as if some one was shaking me to wake up to get breakfast. Half the time I think I'm hollering, 'All right; I'll wake up in a minute.' This morning, fergitting that I was not in a regularity bed, I says 'All right' and stepped out about two yards to the floor on one foot and sprained the tendency in my ankle. Besides, it twisted my back so that them limberger pains came creeping up my spine like a dentist who says that he is boring your tooth without hurting."

Then she remembered something else. She confided her indignation, however, strictly to Merrilee.

"Say, ain't it awful perilsome, the way them fool boys jump on and off of going trains? I was looking out of the window a few minutes ago and sure enough there went tumbling down the bank one of them very

jump-on-and-off boys. He jumped off from the rare end of this train."

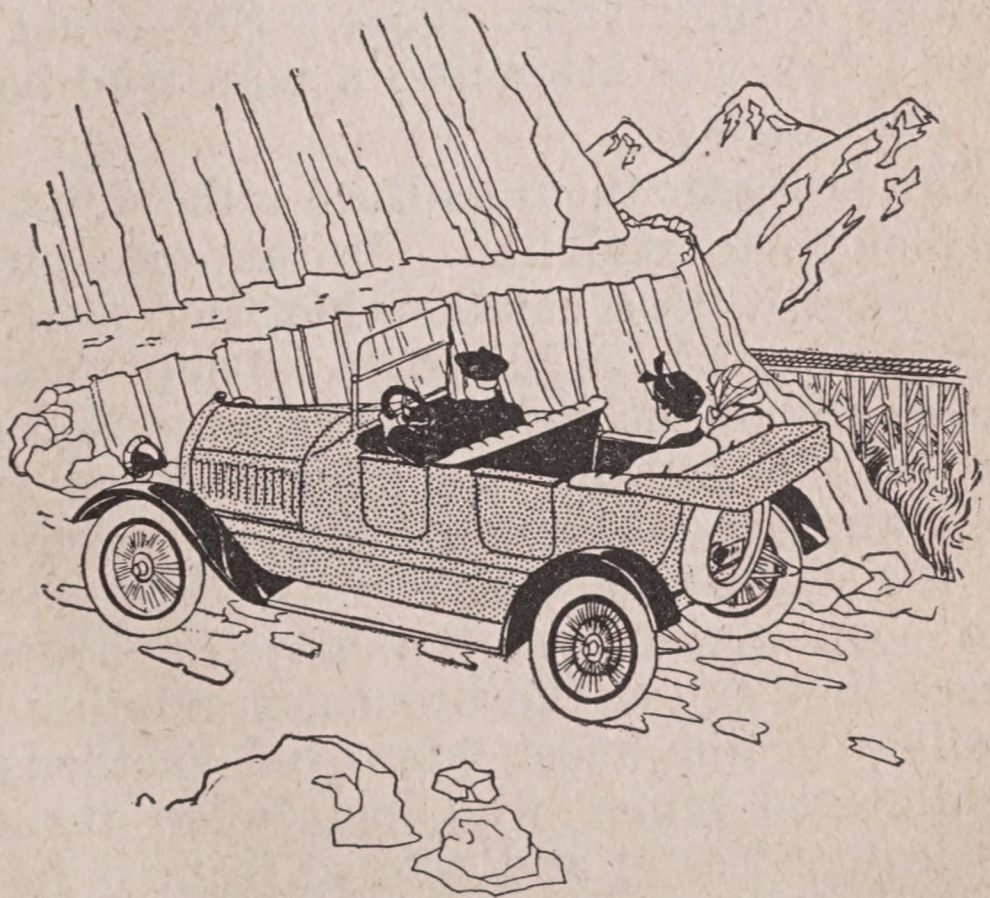
Molly knew nothing of the case, but Merrilee became certain that the boy scout had fallen off, perhaps in some venturesome experiment, for there could be no imaginable reason why he would jump off. She called to mind that she had invited him to look at the scenery with her from the rear end of the train, and somehow she had failed to meet him there. She decided to make a search through the train. This was done without finding the boy and she became convinced that he was the one whom Molly had seen jumping from the train. As they were to stop off for a day at the town now only a few miles away, it occurred to her that she could get an automobile the next morning and ride back in a search for the missing boy.

Uncle Jeremiah's sight-seeing curiosity required them to be ready to get off at almost any station, and, much to Molly's delight, they were soon exchanging the rattling earthquake of a train for the tranquil security of a mountain hotel.

Molly's grouch being somewhat mollified by a good night's rest, she did not protest when the automobile came around to take them back along the railway line on a sight-seeing trip, wherein she must act as compan-

ion if not more professionally as chaperon. Merrilee's mission was of more romantic interest. She was on a hunting expedition for a lost boy.

The towering cliffs and massive overhanging ledges, as the machine spun through the narrow, rocky gorges, made their car look like an insect searching for a hiding place under the wide, leaning precipices, that seemed ready at any moment to shed a shower of many-ton rocks down upon the



mites beneath. Now and then they came out upon the open ridges where the extensive perspective enabled them to obtain some

measure of the vast upheavals of earth that had, countless ages ago, piled up the great divide of the continent. The long distances of vast solitude were indeed awe-inspiring to those who had heretofore seen nothing but undulating plains. Rarely was a person anywhere to be seen, and it was with much more than mere curiosity that Merrilee examined with her field glass an oddly improvised camp, which she could see in the distance, near the railroad, under a scrub oak and against a high snow fence. She could see that a boy was attending a man who had a bandaged head.

The boy saw them as they came down the long slope toward him. He at once picked up a stick with a handkerchief tied to it and waved a signal of distress. There was no longer any doubt in Merrilee's mind that this was the lost boy and that he had leaped from the train on some errand of mercy prompted by the chivalrous creed of the boy scouts. She soon arrived at the wayside hospital. There they found the boy scout nursing, according to the most approved methods, a middle-aged miner who had fallen through the bridge-trestle and was so injured in his head that he appeared half tipsy and more than half foolish. Otherwise his injuries were of no consequence. He talked very lit-

tle and then only in disconnected assertions about a large nugget of gold that he carried in his pocket. If he knew his name, he could not be made to speak of it and the boy called him Nugget, in the absence of any other means of naming him. As if in retaliation for being so nicknamed, the man always called the boy Pickup, presumably because

the boy had picked him up out of the stream and had taken him into camp. However it may have been, the two had taken an unusual sympathetic interest in each other and the boy decided that the two names were good

enough for them until a successful outcome of the situation entitled them to a more fashionable or civilized greeting.

From the best that could be learned, it appeared that Nugget had found a mine of free gold and had attempted to board the train at the watering station to go on into the land office at the next town and file his claim. But evidently what he needed now was treatment in some suitable hospital for concussion of the brain.

Pickup regarded it as his boy-scout task to take care of him. As Nugget had money, the reasonable thing seemed to be to take him on to the best medical attention that could be found in San Francisco. Accordingly, the two wayfarers were received aboard the rescuing auto and increased speed was put on in order to make up for lost time in getting back to the station before the arrival of the train. But the way was largely up-grade and the progress was slow.

Three or four miles were yet to be traveled when they saw the train, several miles back, coming around a turn in the mountain side. Meanwhile, the injured man had become very weak and sick. It was evident that the boy and man could not take that train. The chauffeur was therefore instructed to leave them at the office of a doctor and

take the two women on to the station, where they knew Uncle Jeremiah would be awaiting them with their baggage.

They arrived at the station as the signal "all aboard" was being called. Uncle Jeremiah was standing by the conductor in anxious outlook for them. As they sped up in sight, the train was held for them and in a few minutes they were again on their way to the great scenes of the Pacific coast.

Pickup meanwhile had seen the doctor begin a thorough examination of his singularly dazed patient. Being of no further use, after he had explained about Nugget's fall, Pickup went out on the arbored-in platform of the front door to study out what ought to be next in the course of events. He was aroused from his musing by a tap on the shoulder. A rather stocky-looking man of the plains stood on the ground at his side.

"What's the matter with your friend there?" he asked.

Pickup, believing the question was prompted by friendly interest, explained the entire situation. The man listened with attention that impressed the boy as being more than ordinary curiosity. It made him feel a little less expressive or communicative.

"Why do you call him Nugget?" the stranger asked.

The boy briefly explained why this title was given him in the absence of any other name.

The man was still more eager for information.

"So, so," he exclaimed unguardedly. "Lew has at last struck something. He has found a mine."

"You know him?" inquired Pickup eagerly.

"Know him?" he echoed with a revengeful sneer. "Down in old Mexico we were chums

till he got my Spanish girl Paquita away from me. She's dead now, but her daughter belongs to me by rights, and his mine of gold nuggets wouldn't half pay me back. You tell him that Val Hone is still on his trail. Some day we'll get even."

Pickup shrank back from the unguarded rage of the man. His courage failed him for a moment. Was this new element really within his duty as a boy scout? Had he anything to do with defeating hate? He felt no desire to get within range of a feud.

Val Hone turned abruptly as if he realized that he had said more than he meant to say. As he turned, the chauffeur came up to the boy with a letter in his hand.

"Here is a letter I found in my car when I got back to the garage," he said, giving the letter to Pickup. "I suppose it belongs to one of the ladies who went away on the train. They gave you their address, so you can return it to them if it is worth anything."

The chauffeur then went away. Val Hone leaned over and spelled out aloud the postmark, Arra, Arizona, as Pickup held the letter in his hand, trying to think what to do with it.

"Let me see that letter," he said in an insolent tone. "I used to live in that town."

Pickup tried to slip the letter away into an

inner pocket but Val Hone caught it out of his hand. He leisurely drew out the paper and read.

"So, so," he exclaimed exultingly, "my Paquita is to be a visitor at the Fair.

"Young man," he said, placing the letter in his pocket, "this is a very fortunate find for me. I can deliver this letter as well as you can. It contains all the necessary directions."

So saying he went to his horse, mounted hurriedly and galloped away.

Evil-minded men nourish their grievances for a day of revenge, as if hatred were their best friend, able to reward them for any fancied wrong or loss. The evil mind estimates its values in the injuries inflicted and never in the good promoted. Accordingly Val Hone rode away eager as a wolf on the trail of his prey.

That night he arrived at a station on a cross-line of railway and the next morning took the train southward. When he reached the main line, he met every train coming through, and during its stop, walked the full length of the train looking for the group of campfire girls that was to contain Paquita. The next day his enterprise was rewarded by finding them having a gay time around the irrepressible Paquita. She had brought

with her the freedom of her life on the Arizona ranch.

It did not fit well with the needs of discipline suitable to a bunch of campfire girls going to a World's Fair upon the far Pacific coast.

We always estimate conduct in ourselves or others according to our experience. Our intelligence has no other evidence to use. Paquita had been brought up among cattlemen and cowboys who were ever ready to help her to anything she desired, and to fight to the death for her in any danger to her welfare. That had been her world of men, and she supposed all men were that way toward women.

Val Hone saw at the first glance which was the daughter of the woman whom Lew Havron had taken away from him. She had the look in every move of the beautiful Spanish dancer who had long ago crazed him with her eyes. Though the woman was dead, here was at last his chance to repay old scores and perhaps force from Havron the new mine of nugget gold that he had found.

He preferred that Paquita should not become familiar with his face and he therefore watched them from behind an open magazine which he pretended to be reading. Paquita was exceedingly weary of her cramped seat. She arose and paced up and down the aisle.

Obeying a sudden impulse, she sat down by Val Hone with the intention of making his acquaintance, but the chaperon pounced upon her and brought her back among the girls.

"You'll have to submit to the bridle and harness," they cheerfully assured her. "You may be sure that this Uncle Jeremiah, whom you are going to see, will keep you roped in, hobbled and staked."

She thinks for a minute, and the others look on at this unusual spectacle, knowing that something is going to happen.

"I'm going to see the Exposition alone," she whispered in a tragic voice. "You folks can stay roped in, hobbled, bridled, harnessed and staked. I've got money. I don't have to be a slave."

She showed an ample roll of bills.

"I can spend this just as well as Uncle Jeremiah. Now you watch me do it."

Some of the girls thought it was a glorious idea, but most of them were quite properly shocked. The chaperon went back to speak to the conductor and Val Hone came into the seat behind them where he could hear what was said.

"Why, girlie," cried one, "you're a wonder for ideas, but what do you know about a city or expositions? You'll be robbed and

scalped before twenty-four hours, begging the police to take you to your Uncle Jeremiah!"

"I'll do it! I'll show you!" she exclaimed. "I'll get lost at the ferry. You girls all be scared and sad, but don't give me away. I don't want to be under anybody's thumb."

Val Hone found everything working his way and he went on into the front car.

The long journey was coming to an end and the campfire girls became correspondingly excited. The train was skipping by long strips of water that indicated the approach to San Francisco Bay. They knew they must cross to the city on a ferryboat from the end of the railroad line, and Paquita was expecting to be met on the arrival of the ferry by the relatives who were to take her in charge. She reasoned it out that if she and her friends could miss the ferryboat, from that train, then Uncle Jeremiah, Merrilee and Molly would not think of waiting for another, and she could easily get away to see the sights of the city as she pleased. Some of the girls were eager to help her accomplish her reckless plans and they soon decided to delay things at the station till they had missed the first boat.

At the ferry the girls were so interested in the scenes around them, that, before the chaperon could get them together, the boat

had pulled away from the shore and they had to wait for another.

When the huge ferryboat from the train arrived, there were three watchers anxiously scanning the passengers to see a group of campfire girls among whom would be the expected Paquita, but there was none, and the disappointed trio walked away, leisurely enjoying the peculiar scenes around them of the great western city.

However, with the next ferry came the belated campfire girls. A representative of the camp, where they were to go, was there to meet them. He escorted them to a waiting automobile. As they were climbing into the car, the chaperon noticed that Paquita was missing, and it appeared within the next few minutes as if she had everybody interested within a mile.

Paquita, however, had gone about her enterprise with the assurance of one who never failed to accomplish the desired results. She squeezed her companions' hands and darted out through the crowd as soon as they stepped off the gangplank into the big ferry building. Val Hone could hardly keep her in view as she sped through the crowds. Coming up to the row of cabmen, she stopped to study what to do next. Her mind was soon made up. She called to one of the offi-

cious drivers. He came over to her immediately.

"I want you to take me to a place where I can rent a good room to live in while I am seeing the Fair."

Val Hone heard her. Seeing a young man near by watching her through leery eyes, and guessing his character at once, Val Hone whispered in his ear, "You get her a room at Chin Garu's and it's big money in your pocket."

He slipped a ten-dollar bill into the young man's hand. The fellow responded instantly.

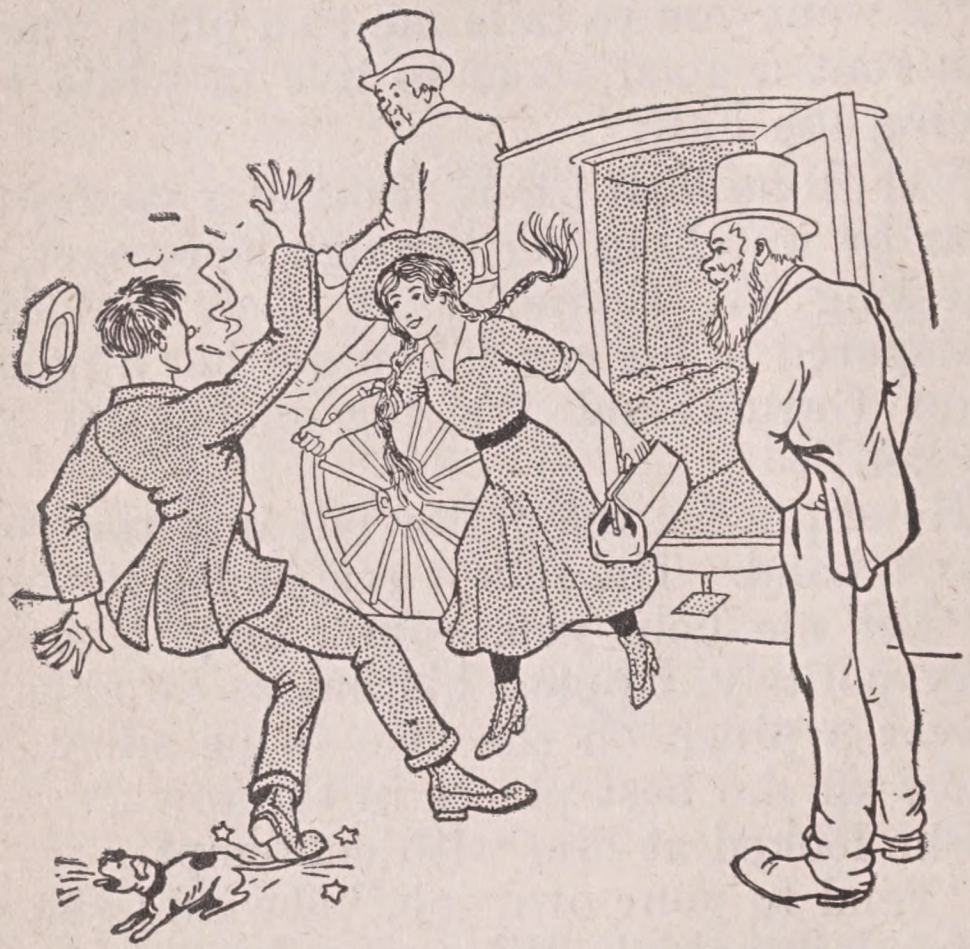
"Let me help you, young lady," he said, very politely, tipping his hat as he gave the driver a pinch on the arm to be silent. "I know all the best places in the town."

She looked at him with contempt.

"Tend to your own job," she said sharply. "I'm doing this! Whenever I want you I'll whistle!"

Such an answer startled him, but the ten-dollar bill in his hand was too good to be lost. The driver had already told her that he could take her to a good place, and waving the persistent young man back, she stepped in at the door. The young man had one foot on the step to follow. She turned and saw him coming in. Her hand doubled up, she gave him such a jolt in the stomach that he went

backward and doubled up on the sidewalk. The cab started off at her order, but the



young man was not to be defeated. He sprang up on the front and, unknown to Paquita, climbed into a seat by the driver.

III.

SOME ACCIDENT.

Uncle Jeremiah and his two companions left the ferry wondering why Paquita had not arrived according to arrangements. As they had a fraction of the afternoon to fill up in some way, they walked on enjoying the scenes of the beautiful Pacific city. Molly was meanwhile somewhat fussed up with the strained "tendency" in her ankle, and the "limburger" pains in her back, but otherwise was voluble and pugnacious as ever. Their pastime-wandering brought them presently to a parkway open space from which they decided to return to the Green Tree Hotel.

Merrilee and Molly becoming tired sat down on a park bench to rest, while Uncle Jeremiah walked on up the incline around the bushes to a higher roadway to look out over the more extended scene.

The old man was musingly admiring the wide extended panoramas of beauty when a rather dilapidated and seedy-looking individual stepped around before him and peered into his face. The benevolent old gentleman, not imagining any other object that the man could have than begging, instinctively put

his hand into his pocket and drew forth a coin, which he placed in the man's hand. The supposed beggar looked at it, gave it back

and laughed. Then he likewise put his hand into his pocket and drew forth a large, ragged piece of yellow metal which he held up before Uncle Jeremiah, laughing in derision. At this point a boy, likewise rather the worse for wear, came up, persuading the man to come away with him. But this only made the man more perverse. Still laughing in derision, he tweaked Uncle Jeremiah under the

chin. This was too much for the old man and he gave the impudent fellow a whack across the shoulders with his cane. Such an unexpected response to his teasing so astonished

the man with the gold nugget that he staggered back into the road. At the same instant an automobile came whirling by. The man gave a leap forward and fell sprawling upon his face in the road. There he lay as the victim of an accident and did not move. The driver of the machine, catching a glimpse of what had happened, slowed down and arose to look back at the results. As this was done, the boy companion of the man who had fallen in the street, caught up a bicycle held

by a boy who had stopped to see the trouble, and darted away after the automobile. The chauffeur did not appear to think the case worthy of further attention. Just as he was speeding up again the boy caught hold of a bunch of tires lashed on the back and kept pace with the machine.

Uncle Jeremiah, in consternation at his share in the death of a man, stepped back down around a clump of bushes and then came with unusual speed for so old a man down the incline. Merrilee and Molly had started up to find him. He caught them both by the wrists and hauled them after him as a child would drag a couple of dolls. The park bench in his path crossed his purpose to run further, and the three were at once seated in comfortable positions upon that convenient resting place.

"I'll show you the difference between a rabbit and a cat," he explained, apologetically, as his heaving breath began to assume normal motions. "You break the neck of a rabbit easier than you can that of a cat because it is not so stiffnecked; that is, its neck is not toughened by as much strength of will. With the rabbit there is no will unless there is a way, but it takes more than a lawsuit to break the will of a cat. That's why I have nine lives. That's why I've brought the one

I've got left down here to you loving children instead of leaving it up there in the road among the dead and dying."

He soothed the glistening spots on his heated countenance with an ample handkerchief of fluffy white, and looked anxiously in the direction from which, as fugitives, they had so hurriedly come.

His granddaughter, as if these happenings were in the natural course of events, adjusted her hat and smoothed out her ruffled feelings with certain articles she extracted from her handbag. With this process of becoming trim, neat and composed, she seemed to have achieved a condition of "safety first," and then the secondary interest became paramount.

"What on earth has happened to make you so sudden, so unsteady and so riled up?" she asked solicitously, giving a finishing touch to the glisten that their haste had put upon her nose.

"As near as I can remember," replied Uncle Jeremiah, "it was that I admonished a persistent hobo with my cane on his shoulder. He gyrated out in front of an automobile and finished up as a corpse obstructing the highway."

Merrilee arose, drawing on her gloves.

"Then we'll show them," she replied, "that the cat came back."

"You are correct," the old man agreed. "It might be natural for me to jump away in a rabbit panic, but I'm a rabbit if I stay in it. We'll go see what happened."

"No! No!" cried Molly, suddenly jerking them both back into the seat. "You'll be caressed and incapacitated in some jail somewhere, and then what'll we do with no protectors so far from home? Let me alone go up there and interrogate."

They arose again and she thumped them back into their seats.

Molly was short and plump and likewise handicapped with uncertain age, but there was abundant energy darting through her, like the expectations of a hungry pig or the responsibilities of a bantam with her brood in a cow pasture.

Before the confusion of wisdom or honor had rearranged itself in their minds, Molly had completed her mission. The little Scotch caretaker came waddling into view with important information. That could be seen from the deliberate rhythm in her movement.

Uncle Jeremiah had arisen. Merrilee pulled him back into his seat.

"Sit down and be happy," she explained. "Here comes Molly. She is able now to tell

us more about it and the probabilities than we could ever hope to learn."

Molly came puffing down upon them, and fell backward into a restful position between them upon the bench.

"The joy-raiders in the ottycar are on the way into the hands of the law," she announced, without waiting for any harmony of operations between her vocal chords and ribs. "The boy partner of the tramp was last seen splitting the wind on a bicycle as he hung tight to the hind end of their contraption. They were just carrying the dead man away in a cabaret as I got there."

"Was it so bad as that?" inquired Uncle Jeremiah, again somewhat panicky with alarm.

"It must have been," she replied, taking notice of her lumbago back, "for I heard a man say they were carting the dead body away to the mortgage."

Molly took a deep breath of reflection on the vicissitudes of life and readjusted her lumbago pains.

"We have courts at home that I could get into," said Uncle Jeremiah gloomily, "without coming to this jumping-off place for such common sights."

Uncle Jeremiah arose, bringing Merrilee up with him.

"We have come two thousand miles to see the progress of civilization," he asserted with the decision of a resolution suddenly taken, "not to sojourn in jails, but we can't sit here like a bump on a log. We must go back and blow our horn in tune with the orchestra."

They climbed the incline briskly back to the scene of recent dismay.

As they came up around the shrubbery they saw a motley bunch of spectators, silently looking out over the scene of vanished tragedy. But the show was not yet over.

"Look!" exclaimed Molly, coming up behind them, "the joy-raiders have gone clean around somewhere and the boy is still hanging on."

There was a hurried scampering out of the roadway as the touring car that had caused the excitement came swinging around the corner toward them, still far exceeding the speed limit. The boy so persistently hitched onto it with the bicycle was flung over into the grass-padded bank, from which he emerged like a bouncing ball, in a bewildered continuation of energy determined not to lose the malefactors who had run down his companion.

"Where's the witnesses to that fellow dropping dead with heart disease?" asked

the car man. "We were already going on a hurry job to the police station when this thing happened. Get in and don't waste time."

As the car stopped at the crowd, they could see three girls sunk back among the cushions in the rear seat, who seemed to be in a state of great nervous agitation. The driver of the car was evidently impatient and in a hurry.

Uncle Jeremiah stopped Merrilee and Molly at the bushes by the roadside so they would not get into the trouble, while he went on into the crowd, and up near the automobile to answer in any way necessary for his share in the tragedy.

"There's the old hot-head that struck my friend with his cane," said the boy, directing the policeman's attention to Uncle Jeremiah. "Get him."

The policeman got him, but with reassurances that there was nothing more serious than a little inconvenience. He allowed his prisoner to go back for a few words with his women folks.

"There!" exclaimed Molly, blubberingly, as she forgot all about her lumbago attack, "I knew he'd be caressed for distributing the peace. I wished we'd never thought of patronizing this furrin shore."

Uncle Jeremiah told the two women to re-

turn to the Green Tree Hotel, where he would meet them as soon as he could get back from the station. Then he returned to the automobile. The car turned and drove away according to the policeman's directions, and seeing no more to see, the collection of curiosity-seekers dispersed.

IV.

A GETAWAY.

At the station they found a disgusted policeman wrangling with a still more disgusted cabman. The dead body had vanished somewhere along the road. They had

stretched the corpse out carefully on the carriage cushions and reverently closed the door. The policeman out of respect for the dead had ridden outside with the driver. But when they got there, the cupboard was bare, so to speak. Somewhere along the road the bird had flown, as it were.

Pickup was puzzled if not somewhat re-

sentful. Nugget really needed him very much and he did not want to be compelled to abandon his benevolent task half done. Uncle Jeremiah observed that he looked like one who had nothing to do and nowhere to go. Feeling somewhat responsible for the forlorn condition of the boy he called him aside, and they walked away together.

"What relation is the missing man to you?" he asked the boy.

"Just the relation of a sick and helpless man to one who can help him," was the unexpected if not astonishing reply.

Uncle Jeremiah pondered over this puzzle for several steps.

"Who is he?"

"I don't even know his name."

"What do you expect to get out of it?"

"The training to be a better citizen of humanity."

"Whoever put that idea into your head?"

"The boy scout creed."

"Couldn't you have thought of that and used it just as well yourself?" asked Uncle Jeremiah.

"I guess I couldn't have discovered humanity by myself any easier than I could have discovered gravitation. I suppose I wouldn't know any more by myself that there is any sense in being a good citizen

than a South Sea Islander would know the benefits of scientific sanitation. I guess a fellow has to believe what is best from his parents and the company he keeps. I find that the more I get interested in such things the more I like it."

"Where are you going?" asked Uncle Jeremiah, as the boy turned to take another street.

"I am going back to the sanitarium where I had placed my sick friend, to see if he returned there," replied the boy. "I'm going to stick to my job."

"Here's my hand," replied the old man, "to help you through with it whenever you are in any need. I would be glad to represent society in such a task. You can get me any time at the Green Tree Hotel."

The boy hurried away and Uncle Jeremiah went hotelward musing on this process of making good citizens for the civilization of humanity.

Meanwhile, the young man and the three girls were gathered about the officer in charge at the station, explaining the disappearance in the crowds at the ferry of one of their girl associates. One girl ventured the opinion that the missing one was not lost at all, but had deserted them in order to get away from their chaperon or directress whose

restraint she did not like. She had always been a very willful and independent campfire girl.

The young man who had brought them in his automobile explained that he was in the crowd at the ferry when the group of girls found that one of their number was missing. In their hysterical efforts to find her, they were surrounded by a crowd of gazers who seemed to think that it was some kind of a moving picture rehearsal. He tried to help them to become reasonable and was so rewarded by their confidence that the chaperon agreed to his suggestion that he take three of their number in his automobile to the police station and give a description of the missing girl.

The circular notice putting the police force on the lookout for a lost girl was as follows: Name, Paquita Havron. Fourteen years of age; medium size, Spanish in features; dressed in traveling costume of campfire girls; home, Ten Bar Ranch, Paradise Valley near Arra, Arizona; on way to custody of her cousin, Merrilee Tanger, Green Tree Hotel; friends at Campfire Girls' Camp, Buena Vista Park.

The girls returned to the automobile and the debonair young man, whose dark, keen features looked to them like pictures they

had seen of princes from somewhere, perhaps from India, returned them to their chaperon.

Meanwhile, Merrilee and Molly left the scene of the roadway episode intending to obey instructions and return to the hotel. Their choice of ways and directions seemed at every turn to double in number. No sooner were they outside the park than each insisted on going in a different direction to reach their destination. They compromised by splitting the difference. The progress they made didn't look good to either, but the occasional glimpses they caught at high points of the Exposition and the Golden Gate made them forget that they were wanderers from home. The uncomfortable feeling of going nowhere was increased by the discovery that darkness was fast coming over them. To stop one of the people hurrying by was, from their inexperience, an unpleasant task. The wayside travelers looked so independent, exalted and exclusive. However, something must be done.

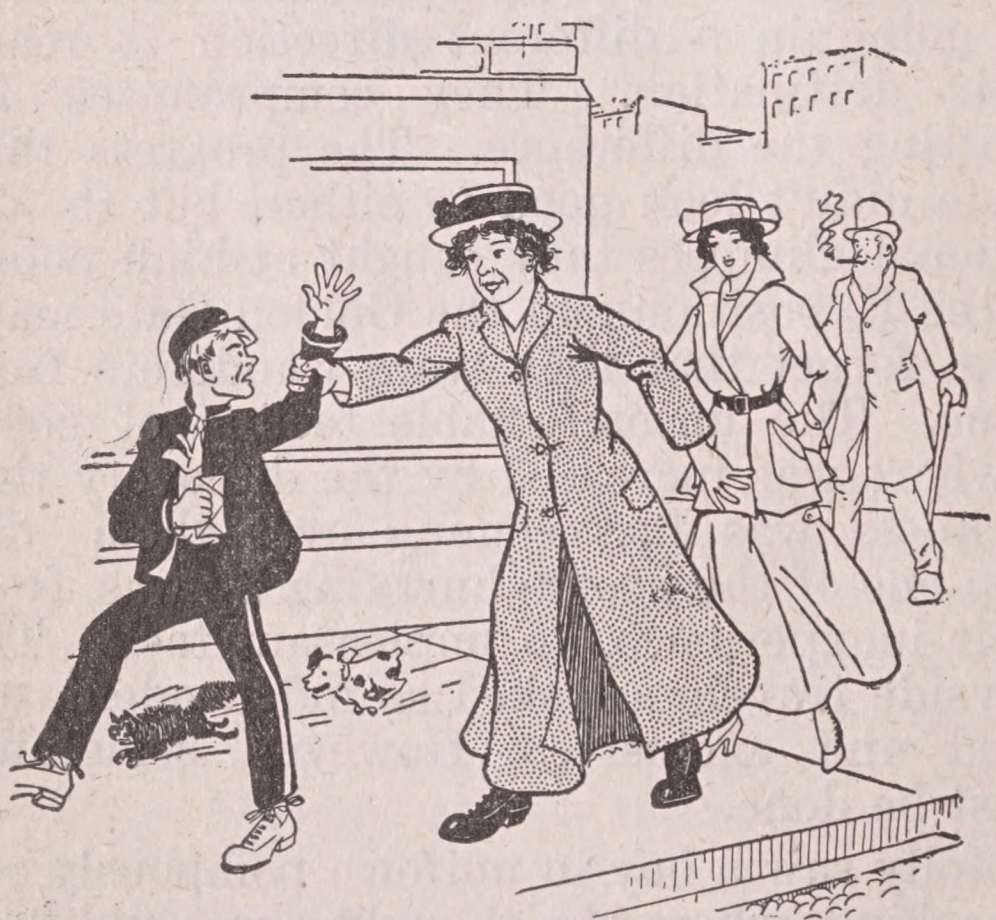
Molly saw a boy in uniform pompously approaching, whom she thought she could handle. She put her hand on his shoulder as he brushed by and he came around as if on a pivot.

"Say, young feller," she authoritatively

demanded as he glared upon her, "do you know anything so's we can ax you something?"

He stared at her with killing indignation.

"Cut out yer kiddin'," he exclaimed wrathfully, "and talk to the point. I'm Roy Jones of the quick messenger service. I'm taking a hurry-up detective message to a woman who has lost a cheeild. Don't delay the service."



He was about to tear himself away in the pursuit of duty, but Molly detained him.

"See here, you oncivil quick message service," she exclaimed convincingly, "you are

hindering the arrival of the delayed. Please forward us to our address."

"Look atche," he replied, in tones of deeply-pained feeling, "me on me first job. More'n a million now in this town and I'm the one picked out to be held up for something that everybody knows but me. You are obstructing the highway. Unhand me and let me go."

He strode indignantly away as Molly gasped and loosened her hold on his uniform.

"If we ever meet that boy anywhere around the eternal throne above," she cried in disgust, "I'll give him a raw piece of my mind right there before all the flapping angels."

They walked gloomily on, every direction now looked wrong to them, with everything getting worse. Molly was blubbering over with language uncomplimentary to San Francisco. It was a place where the very laws of nature changed. She had already herself seen that the sun rose in the North and set in the East, while the streets went up and down like ribbons rumpled for display on the side of a sofa cushion. The stream of people had passed and only stragglers here and there swept serenely by. They saw no one whom they felt like encountering with their increasing trouble, until they saw approaching the familiar figure of a clerical

gentleman, whose pious meditation was visible in rhythmic measure of his movements. His comely air and long-tailed coat clearly betokened him to be of the fatherly order. However, quite contrary to the usual custom among pious thinkers, his attitude did not assume the humble demeanor of bowed head and knitted eyebrows, but his head was well tilted back, and his outlook was skyward, as if his mind was too high to think of anything lower than the handiwork of the heavens.

Molly recognized the sacred book of her fathers, glistening with gold and leather under his arm. There was no longer any doubt that he was one who longed to serve the Master by doing so even unto them.

She caught him by the sleeve and he turned his eyes down upon her without lowering his chin.

"If you please, sir," she said with unusual diffidence, because of awed reverence for such exalted self-estimation, as she brought him to a full stop by a pull on the coat sleeve, "you are standing in the presence of two lost souls on the wrong road. We beg to know what we can do to be saved. Can you lift our feet from the mire and clay of ignorance and set our faces toward the Green Tree Hotel?"

The interruption was majestically ended. The gentleman took one haughty look at the

diminutive obstruction, and then executed half a dozen hasty short steps which rapidly merged into quick-time long ones.

Molly was speechless with the gathering forces of an explosion.

"Did you ever hear such gouty manners?" she cried, waving her arms like a windmill toward the vanishing spook. "Look at his chin pushing clouds and his nose punching stars like a billiard stick. He's posing for a big job in the next world, he is. He's looking up there now to be the first to see a vacancy in the trinity."

Molly believed herself to be not only caretaker for Merrilee but also wholly responsible for her conduct. She rarely allowed her charge to do any of the talking, but these failures, just now experienced, unnerved her and she made no protest when Merrilee saw a chance.

A tall, slender young man, with glistening dark eyes and hair, fashionably dressed, but with much of a foreign air, was coming musingly toward them, lightly twirling his cane. He looked Merrilee over as he approached with the swift glances of trained eyes critically reviewing the good points in an artistic ideal of women.

"If you please, sir," she asked, as he

paused at her questioning attitude, "is this the way to the Green Tree Hotel?"

"Well, yes," he replied hesitatingly with a polite recognition of the honor conferred. "You can go this way, but I advise you never to do it again. This is the direction all right if you mean by way of the North Pole. Each step, of course, lessens the twenty-five thousand miles you have to travel."

"Will you kindly tell us how to get there by the most direct route?" she inquired.

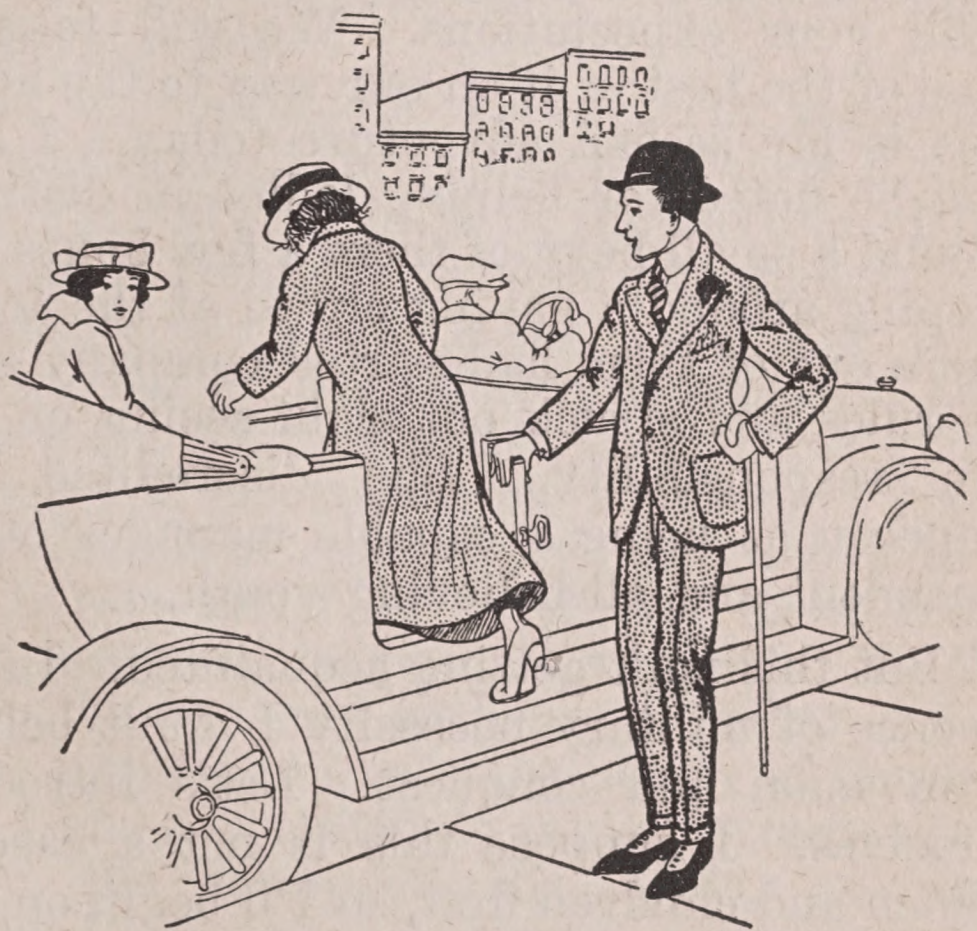
"It's a long walk," he half soliloquized, as an expression of admiration began to lighten his face, "and you couldn't get there before dark unless you called a roadracer and have a permit for right of way against speed laws."

"Here comes a very good machine for hire now," he added, as a car turned around the corner. Without further consultation he motioned to the driver. "I have business tonight at that hotel, and I'll just attend to it now and see you safely home."

V.

VARIETIES OF EXPERIENCE.

The very accommodating stranger appeared to be a gentleman of swift methods



and before they could mobilize any objections he was helping them into the carriage.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Molly, as she settled herself comfortably among the soft cushions, "this certainly beats my specifications. The Chinaman and the Levite passed

by on the other side but the good Samaritan has took us in."

"What else could a chivalrous gentleman do?" amiably responded the young man, "seeing two such admirable ladies in distress. You are here to see the sights of the city and I can do nothing less than help you fulfill your expectations. We will take in some of the best of it on our way to the hotel. This is my second adventure today. I will soon be noted for helping ladies in distress. I found a small bevy of them a few hours ago weeping around a gaping crowd at the ferry, where one of them had parted company with the rules and struck out sight-seeing on her own responsibility. She discredited the chaperon as being a capable manager of independent and all-believing youth.

"But this isn't getting acquainted. In the absence of military necessity I don't believe in invasion and conquest. Let's introduce ourselves. I suppose this is not a case of women and children first, so I'll begin on myself. I am a gentleman of leisure in charge of one of the exhibits in the fine arts building at the Exposition. My chief pastime is to develop experience among my fellow beings in the cause of humanity. I have no purpose and therefore no destiny. My name is Rig

Veda. I am a poet and the poem. I am a singer and the song."

"I don't want to be consumptious," interrupted Molly, "nor to paralyze any one's attentions, but would you give us a sample of the way you poemate?"

The poet seemed stalled, but it was only a temporary jolt.

"If my optimistic views seem somewhat extraordinary," he explained, "then I must simplify. My poem is in the rhythm of life as it flows from the music of experience. The adventure of the day is my song. The poet-philosopher declares that I am a part of all I have met. This simplifies the process of becoming and intoxicates me whenever I am in the presence of real beauty. But above all is the heroic relief of loveliness in distress. Such has been the poem of this day. To discover the lost and to bring harmony out of chaos initiates me into the poetry of heroism and I am henceforth to my subconscious infinity, the hero-poet, Rig Veda, at your service."

He bowed low in humble reverence for one having such a past to refer to and awaited their response.

Molly was outclassed. She fell at once into disuse. She was stunned into a speech-

less silence made from the overwhelming outrush of a superior vocabulary.

Merrilee usually preferred to be entertained when conversation was composed of verbal fireworks, but now something needed to be said to the point. She had experienced nothing with which to compare this adventure and she neither knew what was needed to be said nor the point to be made, but she could make a dash for it.

"Your unexpected generosity has found us," she attempted to explain, "on the streets of San Francisco, and lost us in the wilderness of propriety. I hardly know which is the worst condition."

"That gives me the chance to be a hero twice on the same occasion," he replied. "I'll rescue you from the wilderness, but first let us celebrate with a banquet of gay music and delicious viands before you crown me with laurels for restoring you to your propriety and proprietors. But here we are," he announced, as his flash of expression was interrupted by the stoppage of the cab. "What is a flow of soul without a feast? Life is poetic and a poem only as we refuse to play the notes that are not in the music nor the song. The infinite spirit is real only in the notes that make the rhythm and the tune. You see I am not only a hero qualifying as a

poet but I am also becoming a philosopher."

He had assisted the bewildered occupants of the carriage out into an elaborate if not gaudy doorway, brilliantly flooded with quickening light that was still somewhat dazed by the grayish tint darkening around, as the dusk deepened into night. There were sounds of swaying music varied with tinkling and braying notes emphasizing the soul-stressing pathos of a woman's voice. As they came into the fluffy scene, the tinkle of glasses rippled through the music as an accompaniment to the laughter of girls flattering the ardent ventures of their men.

The imperative, voluble and rushing young man hurried them through the doors of cab and cabaret down the aisle of dazzling human wares to a table of attentive waiters holding chairs in obsequious expectancy, even before the two women could get their breath into any form of question or protest. A gentle pressure upon the shoulders of each promptly seated them through the combined means of suggestion, persuasion and violence, at the same time committing them to the irrepressible interest of hungry people. It all came about with the neatness and dispatch suitable to a previous agreement properly staged to play that part in the given scene.

"You see I am not only a poem of heroism

but also of loving kindness," he began, as Merrilee was about to revolt at the swift turn of events from the expected arrival at the hotel. "I am feeding the hungry as well as restoring the lost. We three are hungry. It's proper eating time for us and there is nothing to prevent satisfaction."

They were near the musicians. The blare and wail of sound, filled out by the billowy tremolo of a song, bombarded the unaccustomed ear, as the voluptuous lights and forms enhanced by the swaying postures of dancers down the aisles, bewildered the eyes and drove into confusion the assembling thought.

Merrilee was alarmed. She wanted to get out of that bedizened atmosphere but she recoiled before the idea of attracting attention and she did not know how to break the situation. When might seems right because it is successful, nothing but a miracle of self-suggestion can give any chance for escape.

Molly liked the show but she dimly felt that somehow she was not living up to her responsibility.

"Say, young feller," she exclaimed, "You may be a poet and this may be a poem you've got us into, but all the same you are a male man, and we've never been introduced according to etiquette. I can't be responsive to the inspectibility of this part without

strict etiquette. As the chimpanzee guarding the reputation of this young woman, I require proper introductions."

"Your honorable scruples shall be respected," obsequiously responded the poet. "Here, garcon," he beckoned to the waiter, "bring the proprietor here at once."

The proprietor arrived with his suavest smile, expecting to settle some dispute or to explain some alleged failure in service.

"Will you please ascertain the names of these ladies and introduce us," said the poet. "The chaperon here desires us to be gov-

erned by the strict etiquette of high society. My name is Rig Veda."

The proprietor was fully up to the requirement of all occasions. He did the honors of propriety.

Whatever protests or comments either the chaperon or chaperoned may have had were soon put out of commission by the arrival of an overwhelming array of delicious foods being served with such dexterity and careful concern for the appetites of each that the only remaining course of conduct was to eat.

Molly did not long remain undecided before the display of dishes and dining instruments. She was hungry and the main need for intelligence in such a condition was merely how to get the food into her mouth.

"My grandmother told me," she explained apologetically, "that fingers were made before forks, so excuse me."

Her silence could be appreciated as the music broke into a balanced bombardment of sounds upon the gastronomic vision of food consumption.

Rig Veda played his part in harmonious attentiveness and there was no discordant place where one might break in to change the flow of experience. The show was so impressive and novel to Merrilee, and so tasteful to her chaperon, that they passively experi-

enced it as a bewildering adventure thrust upon them by uncontrollable events. Even those coming and going kept within the line and action of the play. Nothing broke the scene except in one instance where a little girl came in alone and hastened to a small table against the wall at Merrilee's left, where she was partially hidden by a fern upon her table. The girl's big dark eyes drank in the show with comprehensive wonderment until she was interrupted by the waiter. All she knew to order was that she wanted something to eat and the waiter had sense enough to get it. By the time her food arrived she had begun to see her near neighbors. Merrilee seemed more and more to engage her interested attention. Presently, she took the pencil attached to the menu folio, wrote something on a blank space and tore it off. As she paused, thinking what to do next, Merrilee's handkerchief dropped to the floor. Taking it up unseen by Merrilee, she rolled the slip of paper in it and placed it on the table at the owner's elbow.

The hungry having been satisfactorily fed, their whirlwind entertainer now prepared for another dash toward the Green Tree Hotel. This change was signalized by the temporary subsidence in the flow of soul from the hero poet. Molly had not yet recovered her

power of expression. She was overwhelmed with more than she could digest. Rig Veda's volubility did not seem concerned whether his listeners were entertained or satiated. At least, it confused their ideas enough to prevent rebellion and so far he had found no difficulty in handling the adventure.

As they arose to go, Merrilee placed her handkerchief in her handbag. Seeing that no notice had been taken of her note, the little girl half arose to follow them and then sank back in her seat, for she was hungry and the waiter had brought her much that looked good to eat.

At the sidewalk, they were hustled hastily into another taxicab and were at once racing away in blooming indecision regarding both propriety and results.

A few whirling blocks and they were before another glaring focus of lights. Being already found and fed, there seemed no excuse now for their hero poet to provide any further means of distinguishing himself. Molly was therefore alert to protest.

"This is no entrails to the Green Tree Hotel," she expostulated, as they were whisked out upon the sidewalk into a stream of people entering the high domed entrance.

"For the first time in your life you show ignorance," their rescuer declared, in com-

plimentary admiration. "This is the rear entrance. Come on. It is the last ordeal to a complete restoration of propriety and property."

They were swept in with the crowd, and a minute later, were seated near the front row before a very lively act in vaudeville.

"The lost is found, the hungry fed and the distressed must be made happy," he explained, "and here we are. That is the poem and the dream."

There was so much to engage their attention before them on the stage that they could collect no ideas with which to frame either dissatisfaction or demand. In a vague way they knew they ought to revolt but it was not clear how they were to do it, or what they were to gain.

In the midst of a dull episode and a stale joke on the stage, it suddenly flashed in on Merrilee's uncertain senses that her grandfather had long before arrived at the hotel and was worried over their absence. She communicated her fears to Rig Veda.

"Why certainly," he exclaimed, "if there is the slightest discomfort in your progress toward your rooms in the Green Tree Hotel, we will short cut the obstructions and arrive at once. Life is a poem only as it is mutual, in rhythm and rhyme. The interest that is not

mutual is despotism and war. I am a democracy. I am the happiness of reciprocity, I am equality or nothing. Many ways are no way. We will step through this side door into an alcove of the hotel parlor."

They arose and a few steps down the side aisle he opened a door and brought them into the familiar scenes of the hotel parlors. As they passed in through the parlor lecture room, Uncle Jeremiah came into view, gloomily walking back and forth about the hotel office. Merrilee ran to him as much relieved as if she were a castaway on a desert island just discovering a rescue ship sailing into her long desolate harbor.

She had just explained the cause of their absence when Rig Veda came up to them.

"Kindly introduce the hero of your recent adventures to your grandfather," he asked in an undertone.

Uncle Jeremiah, recognizing her new friend as the man with whom he had been mixed up in the automobile episode, assisted in hastening the introduction.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," asserted the hero poet warmly. "I was deputized by the chaperon of the campfire girls to tell you this evening about the escape of their wild young ranch girl. They say it was her theory that an Arizona girl doesn't need a boss and

that she was ambitious to show all her friends that she can take care of herself as well among city people as among cowboys."

"I have full corroboration of your report," replied Uncle Jeremiah. "A little while ago a messenger boy arrived here with a note from the culprit herself. Listen to this:

'Dear Uncle Jeremiah:

'They all laughed and said I'd be bawling for some one to take care of me 'fore I'd been here twenty-four hours. I've gotta show 'em. Just give me a chanct. Don't worry. I was lost onct two days, and of course two nights, among the sage brush and I cum through. After I've showed 'em, I'll cum into camp and surrender hands down with the guns in my belt. I've had one addventure already, a young man got fresh and thot he'd shunt me off into a bad neighborhood, but the driver said he had a girl of his own, so he spilled the dingbat out in the road. Your affectionate niece, 'Paquita.'

"As the girl has never had any interference from chaperons or relatives in her life," he continued, "she couldn't see any use for them now. Of course we must use every available means to find her. The police may do all they can but we must not rely on them alone. What else can we do?"

"I know one thing," responded Merrilee, "we can notify the Exposition guards through Captain Mulford. I will see if I can telephone him now."

She arose to go to the telephone booth, and as she did so, she drew her handkerchief from her handbag. A slip of paper fluttered to the floor. Uncle Jeremiah picked it up.

"Looks like you had been somewhere to a wineroom," he said, "from the list on this paper."

He turned it over.

"O here is some writing," he added, and read aloud. "Lady, you look just like a picture I have at home of cousin Merrilee who lives with Uncle Jeremiah."

Rig Veda remembered having seen the little girl at the cabaret restore the handkerchief, but had given her no attention and could recall only very dimly her appearance. Merrilee had seen her come in and had then forgotten her. Molly had not seen her at all. And so, their observing powers had been of little use to them in the case. The hero-poet called a motor car at once and Merrilee returned with him to the Cafe DeLuxe.

As they approached the entrance, a little girl was standing irresolutely at one side looking anxiously up and down the street. She was evidently uncertain which way to go.

The familiar landmarks of the wilderness would have remained in her mind, but the blooming confusion of ledges that were called rows of houses, and the long gorges known as streets, left nothing distinct by which to guide her steps.

As the automobile swung up to the curb she recognized the passengers and shrank back behind a column out of view. Rig Veda and Merrilee hurried in to make their inquiries. Paquita looked in at the low window and watched them. Rig Veda suddenly turned as if he felt interested eyes upon him, and caught a glimpse of a form that he guessed was the one they were searching for. He hurried outside, but the girl was gone.

So far, the self-sufficient child seemed to be getting along very complacently, without feeling the need of either guardian, chaperon or relatives. Youthful confidence was making the experiment with civilization and there was nothing yet to prove that it had any need for the protection of any special social system.

VI.

CATCHING THE WRONG MAN.

Uncle Jeremiah desired to be on the Exposition grounds early the next morning because he believed there was where he was most likely to get a clew leading to his willful young relative. Molly went because she was anxious to get out into crowds. She secretly cherished an ever increasing expectation concerning a man with a broad-brimmed hat, a ruffled shirt and low wool socks. The prophecy of the gypsy fortune teller at her home gate assumed more and more importance. Merrilee went to keep an appointment she had made over the 'phone with Captain Frank Mulford.

The attentive young captain met them as agreed upon at the main entrance and apologized for his inability to supply any comfortable conveyance to show them around through the grounds.

Uncle Jeremiah surveyed the prospect before them for an extensive pedestrian exercise. Its beauty could be won only by a tramp. Every Exposition is a dumping ground for numerous inventions calculated to make big money. Any one of the visitors could be taken

aside and aroused to the highest pitch of money-enthusiasm as an investor in these exposition enterprises, but put enough of them together to make a visiting crowd and they would be indignant at being confronted with any such inconsistent and unsatisfying monopolies, operating there to get their cash.

"You can take an electric chair or this miniature automobile train," said the captain, somewhat uncertain that he was offering a very promising choice.

"That toy train looks more suitable as a plaything for children," Uncle Jeremiah commented, "and the chair would set me to thinking that I am an invalid.

"Besides," he continued as one of the chairs began to creep away like a snail, and the little string of mourners'-bench seats, composing the toy train, moved off like an angleworm after a shower, "I can't stay all summer. These conveyances are either designed to keep the visitors here overtime or such crowds were expected to arrive that a mile an hour would be considered dangerous."

"I know another reason why it shows up the big intellects of the Exposition bosses," Molly interrupted very convincingly. "It makes the grounds seem so much bigger. You know my cousin in Scotland wrote me, running down our railroad trains. She said her

donkey-cart could make better time, for she had heard that it took four days for our slow poke American trains to go from New York to San Francisco."

Molly always had an endless chain of illustrations when she got started on that line. She had to tell another.

"I know that slowness makes little things look big," she asserted, "because once I was more than two hours getting over a five minutes' walk, when I was a child, from school to home. It was the longest road I ever traveled. My mother was about to lick me in spite of all my excuses and I had to 'fess up. Billy Sneed, he gave me a box-turtle for a birthday present. Some people as are smart eaters calls 'em terrapins and others as are smart in books calls 'em tortoises. I know that slowness makes longness because I was afraid to carry it, so I just set it down in the road, and shooed along behind it all the way home."

"Have an electric chair," cried a barker for the chairs, coming up suddenly with the invitation clear as a fog horn in their ears, "only two dollars an hour. See the exposition and save your feet."

"No electric chair for me," said Uncle Jeremiah, "I have not yet committed that kind of crime and I am not yet condemned."

"Come on," cried Merrilee impatiently. "We'll chase the sights and scenes as the hunter does his game, and never know how far we walk."

She was joined at once by Captain Mulford and they led the way on toward the billowy domes and arches of rainbow colors unfolding to their vision back of the Tower of Jewels. They went around through the architectural dream known as the Courts of the Seasons and then across among the stately pillars before the entrance to the Palace of Art.

"Many millions spent to make a scene that can last only a brief year," soliloquized Uncle Jeremiah. "I am told that England, France and America are the only nations that love a show enough to think it worth the money. I must say that these artificial make-ups look rather feeble after you spent an equal amount of time in Mammoth Cave, the Grand Canon. Yosemite Valley and a few others of America's Eternal Expositions."

When the survey was complete Mulford took Merrilee over to the horse show to see a beautiful young race horse he had just bought on the recommendation of a friend. He had it now in training for the rival tests soon to be made for racing points and trials of speed.

Uncle Jeremiah went on to the California

building because he desired to become familiar with the various resources of the great Pacific State.

Molly stopped off at the amusement section known as the Zone, instinctively believing it to be the more favorable region for her peculiar quest. She was therefore more interested in watching the throngs than in the glowing promises of sights to be seen inside the many gorgeously carved buildings.

She was beginning to feel very lonesome for some one to talk to, and the prophecy of the gypsy seemed very remote, when she was suddenly thrown into a panic of conflicting thoughts from a vision that brushed by her and floated on ahead. The unexpected that she had been looking for had surely arrived. The gypsy woman at her gate had dipped into the future and seen things after all. A broad-brimmed hat that looked like the other two signs might be with it was ahead of her in the crowd. Then somebody going cross lots bumped into her and for a moment she thought the hat had got away from her. But fate was managing the case. Another look reassured her. The hat was still there. Now for the other signs. How could she verify them? She succeeded in getting up close behind him, when for some unaccountable reason he took hold of his trousers at the side

of his legs, as a lady does her skirt in crossing a muddy street, and lifted them high enough to show a pair of low woolen socks.

"Fate is making him do it," she whispered in ecstasy to herself, "and it's just to show that clairwants can see the facts."

Nothing remained in the chain of evidence but to see if he had a ruffled shirt. Fate would doubtless also attend to that matter for her if she would patiently do her part. Accordingly, the fated man turned into a narrow alleyway between two buildings. She followed him. He stopped and leaned disconsolately against the side of the building. Fate was touching his heart and making him wait for her. She must do her part. She touched him lightly on the shoulder, but he gave no heed. Then she modestly rested her head against the inner side of his left arm where she could see inside of his open coat. Behold! He had on a ruffled shirt. That was testimony enough. She felt his arms just naturally stealing around her. Then she looked up into his eyes. Then she blinked and looked again. She stiffened up and took a final convincing look.

"You here?" she cried, trying hard to doubt her eyes. "You, Abner Bean, following me around on the produce of that roan colt. Plague take you, take that!"

She swatted him one on the jaw and that excited her to come back with another on the other jaw.

"Go it, Molly," he cried, "that feels good. It's worth coming all the way to San Frisky fer, even if I never see hide ner har again of that roany colt."

An Exposition guard happened to be near when the crowd began to pour into the alley to see the excitement. He rushed in and grabbed the two of them.

"Let her alone, hossifer," cried Ab, "them

is jist love licks. The more she hits me the better she likes me."

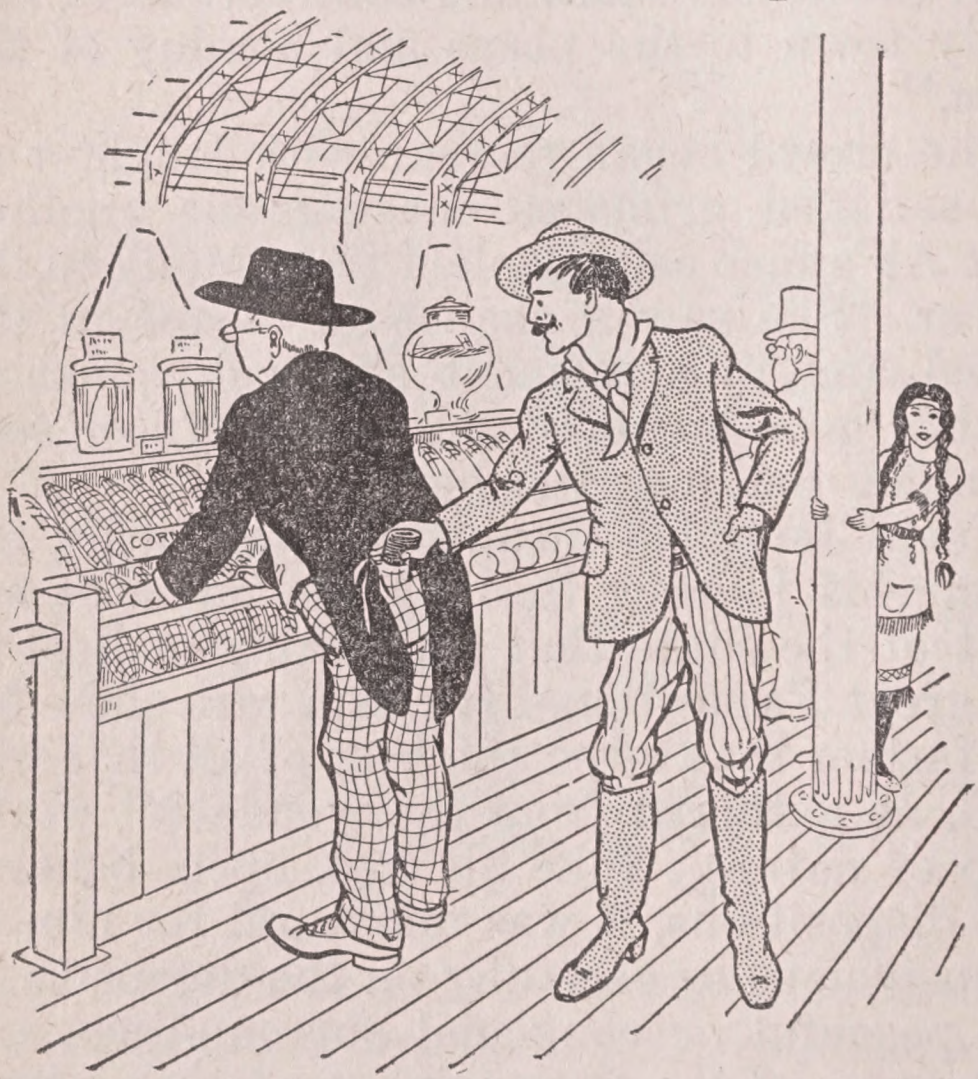
"Is she your wife?" asked the guard as he saw the good-natured grin on Ab's countenance.

"Not yit, mister," he asserted, "but she's going to be just as soon as I kin git her away from the abstractions and contractions of this giddy town to the pease and hominy of the farm."

The crowd began to roar with laughter at the satisfied grimaces chasing one another over Ab's face as he looked from Molly to the officer. She saw a chance to escape in the crowd and in a moment she had vanished. With a good-humored shove, the officer sent Ab along the line after her.

Uncle Jeremiah meanwhile was richly enjoying his journey through the immense exhibit of the State that was acting as host to the great Exposition. It was a rare show for the farmer that loved the best of all that was good, as gathered from the wonderful workshop of nature. Like all free, open, benevolent dispositions, it was unnatural for him to be suspicious or carefully on the defensive in any peaceful or congenial surroundings. A plainsman of the aggressive, underhand type noticed this as the old man wandered by him. He suddenly took interest in this strolling

stranger as being an exceptional one out of the many. The fellow had never been a sneak thief for he preferred to take toll in the more heroic fashion of the frontier highwayman. Nevertheless, he was always in need of more money and here was a bulky wallet in easy evidence every time Uncle Jeremiah leaned over to examine some specimen of



farm produce on one of the tables. Nothing seemed easier to a mind on the alert for gain

at another's loss. Uncle Jeremiah believed he was free to give his attention to the good things of human progress. He was at his ease in the midst of peaceful society. He had made a satisfactory survey of the magnificent display and was taking a final look at the general scene when his attention was caught by a little girl making signals to him from around the corner of an orange toy-house. Not being sure of what could be intended by this unusual proceeding, he rather slowly obeyed the summons, when she retreated hastily to a position farther down the aisle in hiding by a table heaped with apples, where she still motioned quite vigorously for him to come to her. Then he stopped and she saw that he thought she was attempting some joke on him. At this she presently ran around to him and said, "You haven't got your pocketbook any more. I saw it go into another man's pocket. If you'll get a policeman and keep sight of me, I'll stay on the trail of the thief."

She ran back to her former place and then ran on farther down the aisle as she spotted the pickpocket getting away with his spoils. Uncle Jeremiah made several slaps and grabs at various pockets, but his well-filled wallet was not there. He caught a glimpse of the little girl still going. He knew that he must

get busy if he profited by her keen eyes and swift feet. With a return of youthful agility he kept her in sight to the far end of that long building, and at the door he fortunately ran onto the captain and Merrilee, who were returning from the horse show in the stock pavilion. In another moment the swifter young man had caught up with the girl and was given a glimpse of the escaping criminal. The fellow was heading for the excursion boats, where he expected to be able to side-track any possible pursuit.

Relieved by the officer from any further responsibility, the little girl stepped around the concrete base of the great Oregon flag-pole and watched Uncle Jeremiah looking for her. A piece of blank paper fluttering along the ground attracted her attention. She picked it up and borrowed a pencil from a bystander. Then she wrote something upon it and walked around to Uncle Jeremiah. He thanked her heartily and wanted to know her name, but she laughed at him and held out her hand for a reward. He didn't have a cent. Then she laughed at him again, and unseen by him, slipped the bit of paper into his pocket. Then she ran away, waving her hand and laughing at him.

The old man went on toward the docks of the excursion boats, hoping to see the cap-

ture of the thief. As he walked along the side of the low wall dividing the Exposition grounds from the beach, he came upon a man leaning wearily against the sloping side as if he were ill or very weak from too much exertion. His head was bowed and his face covered with his hands.

"My good man, what is it?" he asked sympathetically, "may I help you in any way?"

The man looked up as if only half understanding his questioner.

"Ah! I see it is Nugget," he continued. "I am glad to meet you again. You may be sure I will treat you better this time. I did not know you were sick from a serious accident."

Nugget did not reply, but he looked at him attentively as with a struggling memory.

"The boy is hunting for you," continued Uncle Jeremiah. "He is very anxious to find you."

"The boy found me," replied the man, straightening up with sudden energy. "He found me at the Sanitarium. We came out here to see the Exposition for a restful pastime. I was sitting here listening to the doleful sounds of that bell out there in the bay. The waves ring it night and day to tell those who listen where are the sunken rocks. But there is nothing on land to warn us of unseen danger. I was walking along the shore try-

ing to get my head clear of the rumblings in it, when a man came running toward me. He took a vicious look at me and knocked me down out of his way. I saw him enough to know it was Val Hone. Pickup had already told me how he talked when he came up to the doctor's office where the ladies took me in the automobile out in Wyoming. Pickup was over there looking at the statues when he heard me cry out at the villain. He took after him and is after him yet. Just as I got up an officer of the guards came running after the same man. I guess the fellow had committed some crime and was trying to get away."

"Yes," replied Uncle Jeremiah, "he has stolen my pocketbook. Can I call a cab and have you taken back to the Sanitarium?"

"No," was the positive answer. "I'll stay right here till Pickup comes back. I'm getting better rapidly. You go on and help get the man. That's most needed now."

Uncle Jeremiah agreed with him and so hurried on in the direction taken by the thief. The pier for excursion boats lay on one side of him and the harbor yachts on the other. Somewhere in that region the thief and his pursuers had disappeared. Presently he saw Captain Mulford walking along the pier as if he had been baffled in the game. However,

Mulford was sure that one of the yachts or excursion boats alongside the pier contained the man he sought. All appeared equally innocent. One nevertheless was not so. He came over from the front of one of the half-filled excursion boats and sat down by a boy who seemed to be quite on the alert for events.

"What are you on this boat for?" he said in a low voice to the boy, with a look that was meant to convey a withering command to get off of his trail.

"You have no authority to ask the question, Mr. Val Hone," was the reply. "We are not here for the same reasons, but neither of us have to tell them."

Captain Mulford came walking by carefully looking them over. The boy arose. As he did so Val Hone slipped something into the boy's pocket, and with a quick dig of his elbow into the boy's side, sent him overboard. Overwhelmed with the sudden confusion of the plunge into the water, he began blindly swimming away around the rear end of a near boat. It looked like the get-away of some one escaping an officer. Val Hone stepped around the cabin and disappeared. Captain Mulford, believing that the fellow in the water was his man trying to escape him, sprang into the boat and leaped over the side

after the fugitive. The observers thought it was a rescue. But, when he had the dazed boy up on the dock, he went through his pockets and triumphantly brought forth the wallet of money that had been described to him. A crowd had gathered around them, and when Uncle Jeremiah pressed his way in, he found that the officer had taken his captive out and was hurrying away with him. As the crowd loosened up in dispersing the old man caught sight of the Captain disappearing around a corner. He hastened after him, and was coming near in a breath-taking chase, when he saw that the little girl who had notified him of his loss was also running in the same direction. Her swifter feet brought her there first. He saw her plant herself in front of the officer, barring his progress.

"I saw the thief steal the pocketbook," she insisted. "I showed him to you and this is not the fellow."

"But I found the pocketbook on him," replied the officer convincingly, "and he jumped overboard to get away from me. Isn't this your money?" he asked, handing the wallet to Uncle Jeremiah.

"This is my money," he replied as he recognized Pickup, "but I believe the little girl. I don't believe this boy is the thief."

Pickup then described to them how Val Hone had come running by, how he had viciously struck Nugget because of some old enmity between them, and how he had quickly guessed that the man was running from some deviltry and so decided to keep him in sight till he could call an officer. That the thief had put the money into the boy's pocket and then pushed him over appeared very plausible.

Mulford asked Uncle Jeremiah to go and explain to Merrilee so he could take the boy back to his friend, and drive them over to the Sanitarium as a final vindication of the boy's story.

Pickup looked around for the little girl that he might thank her for coming to his rescue, but she was gone.

Uncle Jeremiah went back to the place where Merrilee was waiting for him and described the entertaining events. It was agreed that they were getting their money's worth at the Exposition, and all would be happy except for the wild ranchgirl, who they well knew must sooner or later come to grief and be glad of their protection and interested relationship. They met Molly, as agreed, and were by nightfall seated comfortably at a table in the Green Tree Restaurant discussing the interests of the day. Molly brought

attention to her increasing idiosyncrasy by announcing that she had experienced a very busy day investigating broadbrimmed hat folks. Some had pleated shirts but were devoid of low wool socks and vice versa. None had all three of the signs. Uncle Jeremiah was somewhat troubled to be sure whether it was a Scotch joke or an old maid mania.

In hunting for something in one of his pockets, he drew out a rather weather stained scrap of paper. It attracted his curiosity as something unusual. Straightening out the creases on the table, he read:

"Dear Sir—I'm glad I told you about your pocketbook for you look just zackly like a picture at home which my father calls Uncle Jeremiah."

VII.

SEEING THE SIGHTS WITH MOLLY.

The police could get no clew to the missing Paquita. The Exposition guards had questioned numerous lone girls of the given description, but none of them had any trouble in pointing out their respective protectors.

The next morning an early message was left for Uncle Jeremiah. He was asked to call as soon as convenient at the Palace of Fine Arts in the section controlled by Rig Veda. There he would receive important news. Such was their interest that the three set out to arrive there as soon as the gates were open. Molly was but little concerned, and, as usual, she devoted herself to the Zone.

They found Rig Veda awaiting them with the complacent air of a victor who was accustomed to succeed where all others failed.

"I put out a drag net of telephone inquiries last night and this morning," he explained, "covering all the registered hotels and boarding houses in walking distance of the Fair grounds. I struck the right one this morning after breakfast. A girl named Fanny, which you know is the English for Paquita, rented a room there for a week and paid for it. The

description fits our girl. She had left only a few minutes before I called up. I went over at once and found this on her dresser. She had taken her satchel with her.

" 'Dear Grandmother:

" 'I meant to write you that I got here and I can take care of myself in a city just as well as on the ranch. I don't want no boss. Don't let no letter from the campfire bunch scare you about me. I think I have saw our relations but I don't need them. The campfire girls have my drygoods. I have had so much action today that I'm all tuckered out. I'll finish tomorrow night.' "

"That's the girl all right," said Uncle Jeremiah. "In the language of the ranch, we must rope her in when she returns to her room tonight, without fail."

"Leave it to me," said Rig Veda. "I'm her captor. I'll make the catch. We will plan an evening call upon the elusive lady and give her the surprise of her life."

A complete plan being agreed upon, Uncle Jeremiah went to take a look through the agricultural building, while Rig Veda was delighted to show Merrilee through the beauty-bedecked aisles of the art building.

Meanwhile, Molly, still holding to her conviction that the gypsy fortuneteller's predic-

tion was to come true somewhere in the Zone, pursued her fate wherever she could find a sign. Her experience in finding all the signs in Ab Bean did not count. He had played a mean trick to win her confidence. "Plague take it!" she would make him sorry for such a joke on such a serious subject. But Fate would not desert her. It could not do so or there would be no such thing as Fate. Her faith was indeed of a healing quality. It had quantity equal to the task of removing mountains, even when there continued to be revealed nothing beyond but the desert.

In the course of her exploration, she stood admiringly before two towering elephant heads erected over one of the amusement buildings. Her imagination arose in fancy flights, wondering what mighty hunter had the nerve to shoot such big creatures and bring their heads to the Exposition. She looked into her purse and counted her money contemplatively.

"It's mighty costly to go into very many of these shows," she said to a woman near her, who stood looking up wonderingly at the spectacular front, with her three or four children grouped around in silent awe.

"Sure it must be," replied the woman. "I haven't even enough money to try one of them. We look on and guess at sights inside.

You don't have to pay anything extra for that. It's as cheap and easy and satisfying as guessing at the thoughts inside of people's heads. We might as well stay at home and

guess at what is inside the Exposition."

"Can't we just try one?" asked a small boy at her side. "Try it just to see how good we guess."

The woman shook her head.

"It would cost more than a whole day's work."

The little boy began to cry.

"Here, little boy, don't cry," said a half-grown girl who had come up and listened to the conversation. "I've got the money to take us all in and it won't cost me any work."

The boy looked up with shining eyes.

"La, Miss," expostulated the woman, "I don't allow my children to impose on anybody. I don't allow my children"—

"Shoo! there, all of you. We're going to see the show," impetuously exclaimed the girl, spreading out her arms and shoving them toward the entrance under one of the elephant heads. "We're going to see if guesses are as good as seeing."

She took two of the joyous children by the hand and tripped over to the box office. As the group passed in, Molly held back with the money in her hand to buy her own ticket.

"You're counted and paid for," said the girl, shoving her on through the door.

When the gleeful crowd emerged, the small boy had very decided opinions.

"Guessing ain't nothing like seeing," he declared with the dogmatic emphasis of an ancient philosopher. "I want to try it some more."

"All right, sonny," said a new philan-

thropist standing forth. "I've got enough money for us to see what that long stretched-out tin soldier is standing up there for, and I ain't afraid of going broke as long as Uncle Jeremiah can write a check. Come on."

Molly led the way. She bought the tickets and the unexpected organization of sight-seers disappeared from view into the wonders of Toyland. When they returned, each child had a souvenir of the excursion and the family said good-bye to their benefactors with many expressions of good will and regrets.

The two new-made friends walked on along the road, absorbed in the crazy freaks called amusements to be seen on each side.

"I'm foolish enough already," declared Molly, "and I've got no time for such nightmares. Listen at them bawling idiots exciting everybody but us to see their show. They have to shut their mouths before their best friends can recognize them."

The blare of a trumpet sounded and a long arm began to rise, lifting higher and higher a room the size of a street car that was full of people. It went up and up high over all the buildings and swung around back down again to the ground.

"People that enjoy being scared into the middle of next week always get perpetration

of the heart," she averred solemnly, "and then they have an excuse to quit some bad habit. That's because every bad habit always comes in on an excuse and it's got to go out on one, so the person can feel comfortable and natural."

They came around before the colossal statue of Buddha sitting over the entrance of a street representing the amusement floats of Japan.

Molly was critical.

"What's the use of spending money on making a sleepy-looking man as big as Uncle Jeremiah's barn," she questioned, "onless it represents how a man feels when he's answering every question that an obliging woman asks about the secrets of the universe."

Her philosophy was interrupted by a barker near by roaring out, "This way to see the startling death of a man falling from the clouds into the bay. Only ten cents to see the snuffing out of a human life. A fifty million dollar picture show going on right now for ten cents."

"For goodness sake!" exclaimed Molly covering her ears, "let us do the going on right now. What'ud I risk the perils of the plains and Rockies for to spend time seeing a movie show that I can see any time at home. Howsomever, I agree that it's the only rea-

sonable human thing along this whole stretch of bowlyvard, but the fellow as would put up money to make such a common thing in this uncommon place to make money with, actually don't know enough to come in out of the rain. I guess he is a brother to the penny-wise institooshun that made seats for the weary bones that wants to listen out in the open air to the soul-soothing music of the Exposition band. The seats are locked and you have to coax them open with a nickle. They get our money coming and going and sitting down, so as to get us to appreciate the privilege of getting our money's worth in our glorious fifty million dollar Imposition. Lots of the swellest big men haven't got as much common horse sense as Abner Bean."

Her only listener appeared to be much instructed and well entertained by the voluble harangue on the tricks of the trade in shows. Molly was a greater wonder to the young sightseer than the entire mile of extravagant jokes on supposed human humor. The long crooked stickleback of gaudy shapes was built up like a caterpillar feeding on the gorgeous rose blooming for the nations of the earth.

"That's why the railroads have to raise heaven and earth," she continued "to get the people to ride across the Rockies, even when nobody has any place else to go because of

furrin wars and their underground torpid boats. The picture shows don't show any pictures of this fair and everybody knows that anything on earth worth picturing is always pictured. Somebody is canning the scenes and putting them in cold storage for higher prices."

The shrill scream of some fife-like instruments mingled with sounds like the thumping of old beer kegs turned them aside to a shivering bunch of jungle-looking creatures, who seemed to feel that they must go through the motions, which were supposed to interest the phantom crowds upon the almost empty street.

"Only fifty cents today to see the greatest display of Squee Gee Islanders on earth. Walk right in and behold them at their cannibal feasts."

"Say," said Molly, "I'd heaps rather read about that. Let's get out of this lunatic asylum. Everything here is money. I can get fooled for less than fifty cents. The best things cost the least. I want to see something now that don't cost nothing."

"That's so," assented the little girl. "We ought to see something big that don't cost nothing."

"How big?"

"About as big as the ocean."

"There it is," was the reply, as she pointed out a thin streak of blue between buildings. "It's just about as far away as across a corral."

"No," replied Molly, with an air of very superior education. "That is just a poor little ornery bay. We have to take a long street car ride to get to the ocean."

"Then let's go and see it if we don't have to pay anything for the looks," said the girl. "If I keep up my extravagance I'll have to hunt up my folks pretty soon or go to work, and I don't know any work but taking care of horses."

"What's your name?"

"Fanny."

"Well, mine's Molly, so we will go to see the big free show."

They left the Fair grounds on a venture of discovery as dimly defined as Balboa's search for the vast western ocean four hundred years before. To be sure they likewise inquired of the natives for the roadway that was to take them to the sea and were lured on and on by promises of the carline being just ahead. They climbed height after height and surmounted one skyline after another in the hope of seeing over seaward, but every top of the earth only showed another higher.

"Look's to me like everything you get,

even the free things, costs work or money," exclaimed Fanny, as they rested on a bench in the side of a hilltop which someone told them was a park. "These city goat herders don't know how to explain anything to common horse sense. Let's stop an automobile and see if such people know any more. There comes one now that looks empty. I'll try it first on that."

She ran out into the road and began waving her hands for a slow down, like a brakeman for a freight train.

"We want to see the Pacific Ocean," she called out as the car stopped within a few feet of her, "but we can't seem to find it. Where is it?"

"That's where I'm going now," said the chauffeur, leaning forward to get a better look at the arbitrary obstruction. "Get in if you want a ride."

Molly and the girl obeyed with sudden alacrity.

The boy laughed as he turned on the force.

"One good turn deserves another. You kept me from a short journey to the lockup yesterday and I'll save you from a long tramp to the ocean today. I'm taking this machine out to a doctor from the sanitarium, who had to stay all night with a family near the Cliff House."

The girl recognized the boy's return of good favors with a smile of satisfaction for her successful instinct.

"Let's introduce ourselves," he continued, as they turned into the beautiful gardens of Golden Gate Park. "As good a name for me as any just now is Pickup. What's yours?"

"As good a name as any for me, just now," responded the girl, "is Fanny."

"The name that is none too good for me," responded the little Scotch woman, "is Molly. The other part may be anything with a Mac to it, but I'm never certain how long I'm going to keep that, not if real gypsy fortune-tellers ever know anything."

The car was delivered. Then the master of sightseeing events conducted his companions upon and down and around the shore bluffs where the Golden Gate of the Pacific leads into the marvelous San Francisco Bay.

Tired and hungry, they sought a place where they might rest and refresh themselves. Over where the car line came down to the shore they remembered that they had seen a restaurant. On the way, Molly was startled to see a broad-brimmed hat, of the size pictured by fate, slouching along some distance ahead of them through the varying crowds. To her sorrow it turned up a side street, but a block further on she turned and

saw it coming. Fate would not allow it to disappear if it belonged to her.

At the restaurant they were ushered in where they could get glimpses of the great sea, not less romantic to them than the sight which thrilled Balboa centuries before. This

picture, with the music and the hunger suggestions around her, caused her to forget for a moment that the hand of Fate was then at the door laboring for her. But the memory

returned and she saw the broadbrim leaning disconsolately against the window sill on the outside near the door, as if he had been looking through to see what the occult pressure on him meant. The pressure on her was equally strong. She must see if there was any other sign. The man's coat was thrown back on his shoulders and evidently the front view would give her some peace of mind. She left the table hurriedly and went to the door. The broadbrim turned a soulful look on her and she fled back to her place at the table. Her persistent admirer accepted as an invitation anything less than a fight. Abner followed and took his seat beside her.

"Well, what can't be cured must be endured," she quoted, as he called the waiter and ordered a supply for himself. But Molly was nothing if she was not polite. She believed in etiquette. Therefore, he was properly introduced. Then he proceeded to smash the monotony and make things lively with a choice variety of opinions about "San Frisky," "plague take it," and its inferior accommodations compared with those at the farm.

The chaperon presently discovered with considerable uneasiness that the glinting views of the sea were becoming hazy and the golden sheen was vanishing in the setting

sun. The waiters were exasperatingly slow. But all things at last come to pass. At the time when the convivial group finished their meal and arrived outside, it was dark, except for the lights up the highway and down the beach. Up the shore banks they heard music mingling with the wash of the waves and the boom of the surges in the hollow wall of rock. Off from the beach in the midst of this star-spangled scene, was a giddy whirl of lights proclaiming something to see, and Ab irresistibly determined to see it all, carried the chaperon away to experience the magic undulations of a merry-go-round, which was striving for patronage just beyond the end of the car lines. The youthful couple, though well entertained with each other, felt obliged to go along.

But Molly's sense of responsibility at last asserted itself over all the demands of youthful interest in novelties, and they decided to return home. Then the young lady raised an objection. She said she couldn't find her rooming house at night and she couldn't tell anybody else how to do it. The perplexity was ended by finding her a room at the nearest hotel and then Pickup assisted Molly to escape the plague of the broadbrim, and succeeded in forwarding her safely to the Green Tree Hotel.

Molly hastened to find her folks to explain her late return, but they were nowhere to be found and no one knew anything about them. She threw herself across the bed, deposited her handbag on the pillow and was soon sound asleep.

Not long after midnight Merrilee and her grandfather came into the room, after a disappointing wait to capture a willful girl that never arrived. They still considered the capture very sure, however, because they had arranged with the landlady to telephone them the moment the girl set foot in her door.

Uncle Jeremiah contemplated the form of Molly on the bed with some curiosity concerning her day's experiences. Seeing the handbag open on the pillow he took it up inquiringly and looked inside. His awkward handling pushed a bundle of crumpled writing paper out on the floor. Merrilee picked it up. She straightened out the folds and read:

"You're all right, Molly. We've had a fine day of it. 'Specially with Pickup and Ab. I heard you say Uncle Jeremiah once. I wonder if everybody has an Uncle Jeremiah? But you look just like the funny little old Molly that my grandmother said lived with her brother when she went to see him. Come

out and visit me on the ranch and I'll teach you to break mustangs, then maybe you can handle Ab."

VIII.

PAQUITA WINS A HORSE RACE.

Rig Veda appeared at the appointed hour to take Merrilee to see the military grounds adjoining the Exposition, next to the stock section, and known as the Presidio. This gentleman with the dark-eyed East Indian looks was particularly attentive, though his role as hero had not yet won any honors. Nevertheless, he did not seem greatly depressed on that account and his eloquent ardor was in no way abated.

They were walking leisurely along the highway overlooking the live-stock grounds of the Exposition when they saw a bunch of horses coming out from the prize stables for exercise on the wide esplanade of the Presidio. Merrilee saw Frank Mulford standing by the side of his highly rated race horse. She loved those animals and suggested that they go where they could see the horses put through the movements intended to bring out their best points. But Rig Veda was becoming more interested in something else. He saw something. He had the attitude of an Indian on a trail. He was looking at something that claimed his attention more than his rival's horse.

"I've been watching that girl you can see over there through the trees. Do you see her going along the elevated walk across the low grounds down there?"

Merrilee saw the girlish figure but could not see any distinguishing features.

"I have a growing conviction that it is the ranch girl," he said quite decisively. "She is evidently not a native and she is alone. You remain here for a few minutes and I will run up across the way where I can get a nearer side view. If I become more convinced, I'll

motion you and go on. If I don't get back with her soon, you take the car back to the hotel and I'll let you know by 'phone as soon as I make the capture. I'm bound to make a record as a hero yet. It takes a high-class hero to get that wild ranchero. There, she has disappeared now."

Rig Veda hastened away on his task. Merrilee waited till her patience became exhausted and then she walked over to a point where she could watch the horses. Meanwhile the pursuer had caught sight of the gray-frocked figure passing along the stone houses over beyond the parade grounds. He cut across the way and hurried on toward her. The girl, as if watchful for pursuit, saw him hurrying her way and quickened her pace. When she saw him turn toward her in a new direction which she had taken she appeared to become panic-stricken and began to run. He also started to run in order to keep her in sight. When she saw this convincing demonstration of being the object of a pursuer, she turned out of his sight between the nearest buildings. On her way she saw a side door open and no one in sight. Quickly turning into this promising refuge, she closed the door and found herself among tables piled high with many varieties of uniforms and miscellaneous clothing. She looked out of a win-

dow and saw her pursuer talking to an officer. She saw the officer call a soldier to him and give him some kind of orders, which he carried promptly away. She was quite sure that she understood it. She was to be arrested by the soldiers, that was evident. Soldiers were persons who shot people. She had to think very rapidly. Now she was sorry she had deserted the campfire girls. They were doubtless in their camp tents having a good time while she was scared and miserable. But something must be done to escape the fate now hanging over her, even if not at that moment stealthily approaching dangerously near. Her attention in the midst of this anxiety was caught by a suit of clothes that looked like what she had seen the stable boys wearing down at the horse show in the Fair grounds. The suggestion was irresistible. She had stolen boy's clothes and ridden around the ranch many a time until overhauled by her irate grandfather or roped in by some of the horse herders. It was then great sport which aroused more applause than censure. It would save her now. They could not know her in a stable boy's suit.

In a few minutes she was completely transformed. A tight cap fitted down closely over her short hair, which she bundled up closely

on top of her head and secured firmly under the fluffy folds of the well-adapted head covering. Opening the door cautiously she peered out and found that no one was in sight on that side. Then she walked out boldly on past Rig Veda where he was directing the search which was being made in every possible hiding place, except the right one.

It was somewhat disconcerting when she suddenly came upon Merrilee seated upon a cornerstone by a low spreading willow tree watching the horse trainers. But with averted head and quickened steps she passed on to the horsemen.

The horses and those interested in them had divided off into two groups under a heated argument concerning the respective racing merits and styles of training. Arguments that can never be decided by reason usually end in bets or blows. These contraries did not go beyond bets. But bets require vindication and the proof was at hand. Their system of assertions must not be allowed to wither away but must ripen into compensating results.

Paquita had come up to the group that made the most motions and indulged in the loudest talk. She was somewhat shocked to find that it was led by the man whom she had seen appropriating Uncle Jeremiah's wallet

of money while she was studying the familiar looks of the old man safely secreted behind a toy house made of oranges in the California building. The chance was now coming for her to foil him again. She was standing directly at Val Hone's back. The group of men were squatted together in whispered consultation as two others busied themselves with taking bets. Evidently this stable boy was believed to be one of the reliable members of the group, for the man taking record of the bets seemed to make little effort at keeping the intruder from hearing as he whispered to Val Hone that Mulford's boy would take the money.

Paquita had been enough among horsemen to be thoroughly familiar with their slang as well as with all the methods ever practiced in the rivalry over horses. She soon clearly understood that the jockey on the other side was ready to play any way for the money. The argument brought on more bets and then the leader scribbled something on a bit of paper, and holding it back over his shoulder, said, "Slip this over to Nat."

Paquita took it and went over to the jockey in the other group. On the way she managed to read, "Go ahead. It's now worth 500 to you." Instead of giving him the note, she whispered the words in his ear. Then she

watched for an opportunity to speak to Mulford.

"Are you betting?" she whispered over his shoulder as he sat on a block of stone and listened to the talk.

"No," he replied, "but my friends are."

"Then don't," she whispered. "The bunch over there is throwing you."

She slipped the note into his hand.

"This was for your jockey," she added, "but I kept it."

He looked up at the youthful stable boy and did not doubt what was taking place.

"Do you want to beat them?" she asked.

"Of course," was his short reply.

"Then just as your jockey is going to mount," she whispered, "you change your mind and lift me. I'll win the race."

"All right, my boy," he answered heartily. "You be ready, and if you will, it's a hundred or more for you."

There was no permission for racing on this broad esplanade of the Presidio, but no soldier was in sight and the hot contestants decided to risk it.

By this time Rig Veda had given up his vision of a heroic capture. The girl seemed to have gone straight up in the air, for she had certainly left the grounds by no ordinary methods. He came disconsolately back where

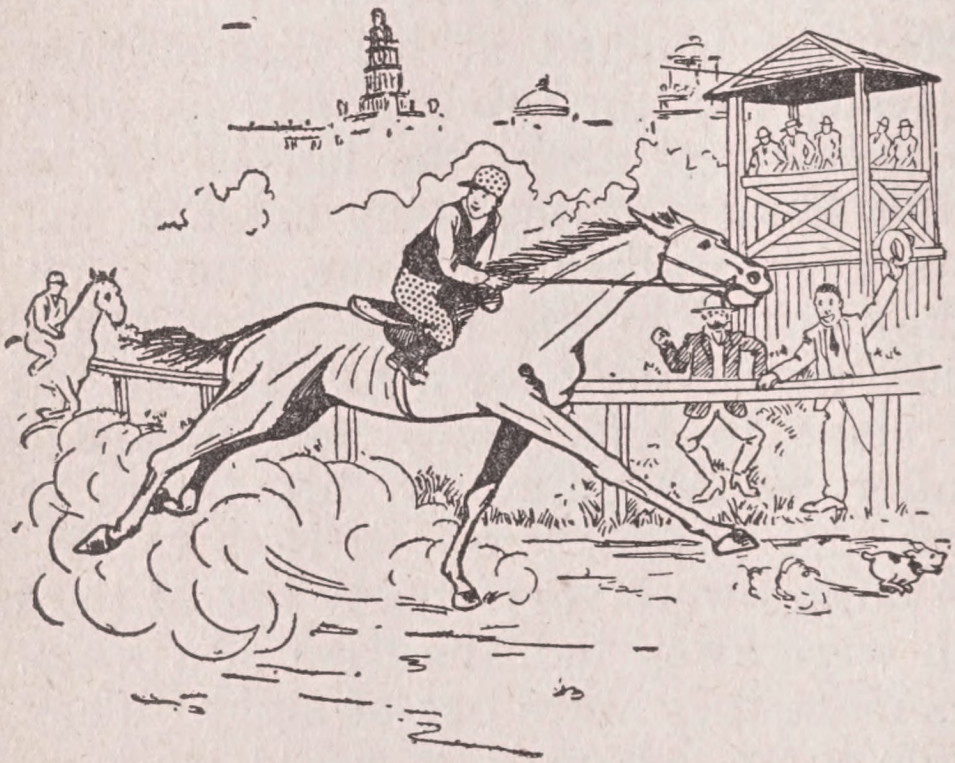
Merrilee was watching the horses and reported the mysterious disappearance.

"This thing of becoming a hero is the most uncertain job I ever undertook," he asserted, "but I'm going to accomplish it if I have to frame up a case to prove it."

Merrilee laughed at his discomfiture and suggested that they go over and see what was the excitement about the horses. It looked as if a horserace was being hatched up.

As they walked on over, they saw one jockey lifted to his horse while the other waited expectantly for a like service. It did not come to him. Two men picked up a smaller boy standing by, lifted him to the horse and adjusted the stirrups to his feet. The horses were very steady but at the word both were away like the flash of a whip. In a moment they were out of sight. They had a mile to go, where they would make a wide turn and come back down the same road. As the suspense grew deeper the bets rose higher. Then there was a wild shout from the Val Hone crowd. Their horse came into sight two or three lengths ahead. But at once their jubilation began to die down. In a moment more there was dead silence. From neck and neck Mulford's horse crawled up until it crossed the line a double length before its adversary.

Lost in the excitement to all her surroundings, Merrilee ran forward as the boy was dragged from his horse, caught him in her arms and gave him a very complimentary kiss.



"How did you get here?" Mulford asked Merrilee in astonishment as she came into the scene, forgetting for the moment all about his little friend, the new jockey. Explanations were made, but were soon cut short, as a large crowd was gathering, bets were being settled and some soldiers were coming. Merrilee went back to Rig Veda, who was standing outside the crowd, a curious spectator of the scene, and asked to return to the hotel.

She didn't care for any more excitement that day.

In the midst of the confusion, Val Hone saw the boy that had made the race go against him quietly getting away from the crowd. He stepped around in front of the little jockey. His evil eye took one piercing look.

"Lew Havron's son as sure as God made little apples," he said, with a sudden motion snatching the cap off her head and letting the thick black hair fall down around her neck. "You tried to help that plug-ugly over there get me the other day, didn't you, but he didn't. You've done it again and he did. It's my time next."

She caught the cap out of his hand and adjusted it on her head without deigning to reply.

"You helped him to it this time," he repeated with a grunt and a shrug of his shoulders. "The third time's my time."

She turned quickly from him, was lost again for a few minutes in the crowd, and then went out over the steep bank at the side of the road and disappeared from view.

The triumphant horsemen looked around for their little hero, but to their amazement he was gone and the purse of two hundred dollars made up for him was left with Captain Mulford to deliver.

That night the captain called at the Green Tree Hotel to take Merrilee to a theatrical performance, when the mysterious disappearance of Paquita alternated in conversation with the equally mysterious disappearance of the jockey.

Some light was thrown on the subject when Mulford drew out his gloves as they were about to leave the hotel parlor for the show. A scrap of paper came out with them, from which he read:

"Mr. Mulford: Val Hone is the man I got you after as took Uncle Jeremiah's pocketbook. I'm glad I found out his tricks in time to ride your horse to victory.

"P. S. You know Merrilee. Tell her I'm getting tired of having no boss. I'm afraid of Val Hone. I've a good notion to come into camp and surrender."

IX

SOME STRENUOUS EXPERIENCES.

Paquita was rapidly coming into the view that independence in a city required a larger amount of nerve force than independence on a ranch. The existence was too complicated for comfort. The problem of people was too large. She began to realize that the individual requires a substantial social system.

She had never returned to the room for which she had paid a week's rent, because she couldn't find the place. There had been considerably more freedom of choice since she had escaped in the stable boy's clothing, but it was shivery to be so thoroughly neglected and ignored. She was startled at how the loss of girl's skirts had been the utter loss of all attention and kindness except what she exerted herself to get. There had been the clear loss of a badge of royalty. For the first time in her life she realized that it actually meant something worth while to be a woman.

She was studying now how to retrieve her former position among friends without abject surrender, and she was not seeing many sights as she wandered quite gloomy around toward the harbor devoted to yachts and by the pier for launches and excursion boats. It

was quite early in the morning and the day offered nothing but so many empty hours in the solitary confinement of being neither woman nor man. Companionship was clearly much more than restraints and conventions. But the eyes of youth are alert for passing interests even as it struggles with its blooming problems. She caught sight of Val Hone moving intently forward. He was evidently following some one. She felt a keen delight in thwarting his designs, therefore she as cautiously followed the follower. The familiar form of the old man in the distance from whom he had stolen the pocketbook disclosed the object of Val Hone's maneuvers. It flashed over her that now was the time to give the man his just deserts. She would run to Captain Mulford and have him put the evil-minded enemy in prison. To think was to act, and she ran to find a guard who could get Mulford there at once. As she made a short cut through the Court of Abundance, another familiar figure came into view. It was Pickup. She ran impetuously up to him and told him that Uncle Jeremiah was in some new peril from Val Hone. She was on her way to notify Captain Mulford and have the villain arrested. But Pickup informed her that Captain Mulford and Merrilee had gone to visit some college friends at Palo

Alto, in the Stanford University. What was to be done must be done quickly, and they could think of nothing but to run back and help protect the old man. Pickup did not recognize this boy so curiously interested in Uncle Jeremiah, but there was no time for introductions.

When they arrived at the pier they saw that Uncle Jeremiah had taken a seat in front of one of the small launches used as quick excursion boats, and Val Hone was talking with the motorman. An agreement was evidently reached, for the motorman walked away and Val Hone went forward, climbed into the boat and took his seat at the machine. The boat began to move away with its solitary passenger when the two youthful protectors sprang aboard and concealed themselves behind the little center cabin. The problem now was, what could they do? As the boat sped away with unusual speed, they began counseling together what must be done.

The boat headed straight across to Fort Baker, where the passenger evidently desired to go, and then suddenly swerved off to go around the ridge at Lime Point. Apparently Uncle Jeremiah did not notice this change till the turn had been almost accomplished. Then he began to question and expostulate. The motorman made no reply but kept on his

course. Uncle Jeremiah was becoming exasperated. He went over and put his hands on the man's shoulder.

"What do you mean?" he inquired. "I paid you a dollar to take me over to Fort Baker."

He then saw that a stranger was at the motor.

"A dollar is not enough," replied Val Hone insolently. "It will take the five hundred you have in your inside pocket to get you ashore. If I have to take my pay and throw you overboard, you may never reach there. Which do you choose?"

Val Hone rose ready to attack the old man, if he resisted the demand. The terrifying moment for action had come. Quick intuitions seem sometimes to be miracles. Paquita saw a rope coiled under a bench near them. She caught hold of the end and knotted it into a loop. In a moment she had a running noose that provided a fairly workable lasso. She had practiced throwing many such a coil. By moving cautiously around to the left of the cabin, she would be able to arrive unseen within a few feet behind Val Hone's back. But Uncle Jeremiah might see her and in his agitation defeat her purpose. She must risk it.

There had been a minute's silence while

Uncle Jeremiah was realizing the situation and gathering his ideas.

"You have evidently made very efficient preparation for this sort of thing," he was saying as the frail-looking boy with a coiled rope came into view. He did not betray the

unexpected interruption to his thought by any movement or expression that Val Hone could see, but the shock of surprise caused him to pause a moment in his talk. Then he very complacently continued: "If thorough provision for the object in view is a rational process, then you should be classed with the

scientists. You have the true culture of a military despotism, and"—

The coil of rope settled suddenly over the man's shoulders. The two pairs of hands jerked it tight and dragged him backward out of the motor box. He yelled and struggled, but his arms at the elbows were compressed into his sides till he could hardly breathe.

Uncle Jeremiah quickly took the end of the rope and knotted it fast so that the would-be highwayman was securely bound, and ignominiously laid out upon deck.

"What's your name, my little man?" said Uncle Jeremiah. "I want to thank you and reward you."

"I suppose Johnny is good enough a name for a boy," she replied. "I'll come when you say that."

"Well, Johnny, just as a bonus," he said, overflowing with gratitude, "here is fifty for you and fifty for Pickup, with the understanding that whenever you need more you shall have it."

"I've already got fifty dollars," replied Johnny. "Don't burden me with being a bank."

"So I have already got fifty dollars, also," replied Pickup. "That is, I have two checks for twenty-five each. But as I am about out

of change, I'll let you cash one of them. That's all I want."

"All right," replied Uncle Jeremiah, "if you won't let me do you any good in return now, I'll do it some time."

He took the check from the boy and glanced at it. A look of astonishment began to creep over his face. He got out his glasses to be sure he saw right.

"Boy," he asked with considerable emotion, "where did you get this?"

"The secretary of the Pioneer Camp of Boy Scouts gave it to me."

Uncle Jeremiah seized him by the arm and fairly hugged him.

"Why, my boy," he exclaimed, "I gave these checks to that man, and you're the boy he sent to the Exposition. Verily, bread cast upon the waters shall return after many days."

Pickup understood.

"So, you see," he said proudly, "I'm just trying to pay you back. Every debt is paid back somehow."

"I believe you," said the old man. "Now, let's go across to the fort and send some one here to pay back the debt this fellow has made against society."

He took a sheet of paper from his pocket and wrote upon it in large letters, "This is a

highwayman. Soldiers will be here in a few minutes to take charge of him."

This sheet he tacked conspicuously on the post to which the prisoner's feet were tied, as a warning to any sympathetic visitors that might appear.

The boat being headed for the shore when the coil of rope settled down upon the crook in Val Hone's elbows, it plowed ahead and ran its nose deep into the soft, sandy beach. The three jumped out, glad to escape from the sea pirate, and headed their way once more to civilization.

It was a longer journey over the ridge to the fort than they had expected, but in due time they arrived there and a few minutes later a detail of soldiers was on its way to get the captive. It was too tiresome a trip to be retraveled by Uncle Jeremiah, but the two boys were eager to see the prisoner taken in by the soldiers. Accordingly, they marched back with the four men.

When they came up to the launch, they saw it was empty. Some one had been there and released the prisoner. The rope lay on the floor cut through every strand. A shawl pin was run through the sheet of paper containing the highwayman notice, like a sword through a heart, and the pin was stuck fast in the door of the cabin.

The soldiers examined the pin carefully.

"It belongs to a half-breed Indian woman who sells bead-stuff around here," one asserted. "I make the guess that it belongs to Ogallalla Sue, and that this fellow has her to help him in such jobs as this. She lives somewhere up this ridge. Let's take a look."

They marched up the ridge where they could have the clearest view and went then on toward the head of the cove. There they soon came into view of a hut with a woman standing in the front door. It was Ogallalla Sue, who had become quite well known recently to the soldiers. When they reached her, she could hardly talk from being out of breath. They searched the cabin and questioned her severely, but could get nothing substantial to confirm their convictions that she was keeping a genuine robbers' den. With an emphatic warning for her to keep the peace, they returned to the launch, and one of the soldiers drove it around to the fort, where Uncle Jeremiah was taken aboard and the visitors returned to their starting place.

Uncle Jeremiah stepped out on the pier and then heartily thanked the soldiers for their trouble. He turned to his young friends, but only Pickup was there.

"Where is Johnny?" asked the old man. "I don't want to lose him."

"But he's lost, all right," replied Pickup. "I asked him where his home was, so we could see him again, and he just streaked it away without answering."

"I am extremely fortunate in friends," he said, "and I want you and Johnny to remember that I am your financial backer for all the good that you can do. Your Boy Scout secretary said that you would send me a report of your work. You are delivering me important parts of it already."

Promising to have the old man henceforth for his uncle and to hunt up Johnny for further acquaintanceship, Pickup left to return to his charge at the Sanitarium.

Meanwhile Molly was still finding her greatest interest in the crowds of the Zone. Men had never before looked so good to her. She often wished that Fate had not restricted her to a man with three signs. But no one can ask any questions of Fate. However, it was becoming easier to read the signs. She was becoming expert at looking through shoe laces at the styles of socks and around the flowing ties that sometimes covered shirt fronts. She had noticed that once in a while one of her suspects looked annoyed at her,

but what was that in comparison with the fortunes of Fate?

While on the alert through a thick flowing crowd, she suddenly flushed with anticipation, as a hunter does when he catches a glimpse of the wary fox.

A broadbrim was swaying among the heads before her. She breathed quickly and hurried forward to see if this were not the one foreordained for her from the foundation of the world. Then a grimace of disgust swept over her face. She recognized the manly form of Ab still playing his game upon her. Now she would fix him. Right before that crowd she would teach him a lesson. Perhaps then he would go back to the farm and tend to the stable where he belonged.

She let him get out into an open space and then she swatted that hat all out of shape and sent it whizzing across the road under the feet of the people. She followed it up with a whack on the right cheek and was about to land one on his left when the startled stranger looked around. It was not Ab. Worse than all he had on a ruffled shirt. An instinctive glance down discovered the third sign. It was the first time she had met that combination of all three together since Ab's joke.

But the man was mad. He whirled around

with an uppercut that would have landed anything in the shape of a man in the gutter. It went over Molly's head. Seeing it was a woman, who looked as if she was having a fit, he grabbed his hat from the hand of a sympathetic bystander and fled. Molly looked up at the bystander. He was twisting about under the contortions of one enormously amused. The shock almost killed her.

The benevolent bystander was her friend Ab. But now he had on a hat almost as much too small as the other had been too large. His

shirt was as smooth as his face and his socks were too thin to wear more than a week.

Molly didn't know how to cry as women generally do to throw off their embarrassment or distress, but she could whimper and wipe her eyes. This evidence of acknowledged defeat nearly broke Ab's heart, and when a guard came roughly forward to arrest her, Ab guarded the fellow off and took Molly under his wing all the way back to the Green Tree Hotel.

But by the time their street car had arrived at the corner of the hotel, Molly had recovered her serenity and her nerve.

"You think you're awful smart, Abner Bean," she flared up as she dismissed him from further service, "and I suppose you'll throw all this up to me when we git back to the farm till life is fairly miserable. But if you do, I'll persuade Uncle Jeremiah to disgorge you. Plague take it! You plague, you!"

She left him gasping and ran on into the hotel.

That evening at the hotel Merrilee reported an interesting day at the wonderful university in Palo Alto. Molly announced that there was nothing more in the Zone for her to see and she was now ready to return home to the farm, satisfied that there were no

clairvoyants and that all gypsy fortune tellers were liars.

Uncle Jeremiah went to his room to retire for the night after such a strenuous and exciting day as his had been, but presently he returned.

"I didn't tell you my adventures," he said, for fear it might disturb your dreams tonight, and so intended to entertain you at breakfast in the morning. However, I have just found a letter in my coat pocket that makes me want to tell it all now."

Forthwith he proceeded to recount the day's experiences in detail. Then he unfolded and read the note.

"Dear Uncle Jeremiah:

"I didn't intend to get into boy's clothes and I hate them. Everybody treats me so dreadfully different. It's horrible to be treated like a boy. In the morning I'm going to spend most of my money for clothes. Day after tomorrow I'm fourteen. That evening I'm going over to the Campfire Girls' Camp and surrender. I'm going to throw myself on the mercy of the court. There can't be any worse jail than being a boy when you're a girl. Then the next morning there will be telephoning that the lost girl is found and I'll be turned over to my dear relatives. I can't hardly wait till it happens. I want to

be bossed. I am sure now that I will like it I want to be a lady after I am fourteen.

"I mean that I want to be a lady and have a boss while I am in the city, which will be only till I can get out of it, and land where a person can think sense and act up to it. City manners looks more risky than the horns and heels of the stock farm. I've tried it and it's more comfortable living among the sandburrs and cactus.

"I met a homesick fellow today named Abner. He got well by practicing new thought. He kept assertin' to himself, 'we'll be happy yet, you bet.' It made me feel better.

"Love to you all, even to my funny friend, Molly.

"From Johnny."

X.

REVENGE INVADES PEACEFUL PLACES LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.

Rig Veda was not very serious or strenuous in fulfilling his fancies as either hero or poet. He had no interest in acquiring responsibility. As the hunter for sheer pleasure chases the elusive fox through the forest, so he loved to chase conduct through its illusive affectations to see what it really meant to do. He enjoyed a lively gamble of guesses over the means and methods used by various types of individuals in serving their feelings. He liked to follow up peculiar appearances to see their process of arriving at results. In this mood, quite ready for such impressions, he came strolling over one of the hilltops toward the bay after a look through Chinatown, when he saw the closely draped figure of a small woman a few steps before him suddenly go skipping along to the corner and peer around in a way to present to him a question not only of curiosity, but one of his favorite problems. What could a Chinese woman be acting like that for? Contrary suggestions came forward with the theory

that only a Japanese woman would show such excitement and agility. The side glance he got as she ran around the corner added to the perplexity by several points from the discovery that she was a white woman. As an expert in solving probabilities and overcoming obscurities, his reputation was at stake with himself. In the interest of benevolent shrewdness toward unraveling difficulties, as well as for the pleasure of such a game, he had long before mastered all that the most noted experts could give him in the occult arts of mental manipulations, muscle reading and sleight-of-hand feats, including other mystifying professions. No accidental combination ever popped up before him that was not a challenge to his skill, and nothing of the kind was ever allowed to defeat his ability to solve the problem. He believed that every human puzzle solved by him promoted his proficiency for larger complications wherein he would find satisfaction and success.

With increasing interest to vindicate his science, he hurried on past the many pedestrians who saw nothing worthy of their attention, gained the opposite side of the street and came across from the figure that had become his problem. Brief observation disclosed that she was moving to keep pace with a man she had in sight, who was distin-

guished chiefly among the shifting pedestrians of the sidewalk by the varying speed and cross movements of a broad-brimmed hat. But this only advanced the problem. Why was the broad-brimmed hat making such eccentric changes in speed and direction?

Rig Veda had convinced himself that there is an astronomy of human wills. That is, he believed that the movement of each will was affected by the movement of other wills according to a system of influence proportioned in a system as fully reciprocal as that of the stars. As astronomical mathematicians locate unseen planets by calculating the variations of surrounding bodies, so a sufficiently expert social scientist should be able to interpret the movements of one will by the aggressive or defensive conduct of others in the sphere of influence. He decided that an unseen will on the defensive was accountable for the aggressive changes under the broad-brimmed hat. The task was now to discover that disturbing will and he would have a chain of causes actually leading to a reasonable explanation of the situation. But he could frequently see clear streets beyond the hat and the theoretical will thus disturbing the man was nowhere in evidence. His dashes here and there did not look as if he were trying to seize any one, but rather to

keep some one in sight who was trying with equal zeal to avoid him. This put a new point to his interest. Was this a detective spotting a criminal or was it a victim endeavoring to escape a criminal? Some light broke into this question when he saw a little girl run out of a hallway toward which the broad hat was coming and turn as quickly as possible into a narrow alley at the corner of the building. This glimpse quickened his perception as well as his interest. As the man turned to pass back to the next street, Rig Veda remembered seeing such a face at the horse-race, where he had gone with Merrilee after he had lost sight of Paquita at the military reservation.

His science had gone into interpretations so far beyond the feminine form he had started out to follow that he had forgotten all about her, when he was suddenly reminded of the original mystery by seeing her cross the street and walk along cautiously directly in front of him. Why she was spotting the big hat was now of minor importance, but it must not be neglected as she might be able to throw considerable light on the suspicious proceedings operating before them. With that idea in mind he stepped briskly forward and laid his hand on her shoulder. She

hopped around with rather a disconcerting screech of fear.

"Oh, Mr. Rig Veda!" she exclaimed, almost collapsing with relief, "I'm so almighty glad it's nobody worse than you. I'm beginning to be skeered. I slapped a man yesterday in the Fair grounds and made him awful mad and he has been keeping right along in front of me for upwards of a mile."

"Well, I'm glad it's no worse than you, Molly," Rig Veda replied, with perhaps more evidence of disgust in voice and gesture than his pride in self-control intended to display. "But tell me at once what is that man doing going first slow, then fast, and crossing and recrossing the street?"

"I don't know," she replied humbly, "unless he's trying some way to dodge Fate. I'm an old-fashioned Scotch Presbyterian, Mr. Rig Veda, and what is to be will be. You can't get away from it."

Theology was not now in Rig Veda's line of investigation. The big hat was already out of sight around the corner.

"Excuse me," he replied impatiently, shaking loose her hand which was holding on to his coat sleeve. "I've got more important business."

He made a step forward, but was brought back by a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Not till ye pollygize," was the venement explosion in his ear. "She's a leddy, she is, and has to be treated like one even in San Frisky."

"No! No!" cried Molly, giving the fellow a series of punches in the stomach that caused him to open his mouth and look pleasant. "He ain't got nothing against me and

don't owe me anything. He's a hero and a poet, for I hearn him say so. You ain't no right to sass him, you plague of an Abner Bean. Sich folks as he is ain't got nothing agin leddies, have they, Mr. Rig, Mr. Veda?"

"Well, he's got to pollygize anyhow, fer I've got to make somebody pollygize 'fore I leave this town, jist to show 'em I can do it," cried Abner wrathfully. "And this looks like as good a floppertunity as I can git."

Rig Veda tweaked him under the chin and turned again to follow the big hat. Ab was not to be thwarted so easily in his resentment against "San Frisky" and things in general. He reached out his hand and hooked the departing gentleman around the neck and brought him back around. This was losing precious time. Severe measures were regarded as necessary. Rig Veda landed one on Ab's solar plexus and he doubled over like a landsman on deck in a stormy sea.

"There now, that will do ye," exclaimed an authoritative voice, as Rig Veda turned from his pugilistic feat and bumped into a self-satisfied gentleman who turned back his coat and displayed the star of a plain clothes man from the police force. "I've been watching yer quare actions for siveral blocks, and when ye laid yer hands on the loidy's shoulder it was time fer me to intervene. Yer way

of walking the streets av a decent city aire too crooked fer pastime or business. It 'ud suit only the conduct of a luny or crook. And it ends in a foight."

Rig Veda attempted to explain.

"Tell it all to the station. Tell it all to the

station," he repeated. "There's a rigular officer fer that job. We've got to clane this city of suspicious characters. We have to protect

the citizens of all nations this year. Come on wid ye."

He reached around for the discomfited Abner, but that worthy was going down hill faster than a drunken gambler. Molly was then told when to appear as a witness and she was left bewildered and humbled to make her way over the billowy earth back to the Green Tree Hotel.

The incorruptible officer of municipal cleanliness started for the station with his suspicious character.

"Why didn't you get onto the zigzags and curves of the chap I was following?" inquired Rig Veda. "You might have had something to 'clane up' that needed it, if you had felt on a few links ahead in the chain of circumstantial evidence."

"There now, none of yer kiddin' to an officer in pursoot of his dooty," responded the officer, with a series of emphatic jerks to show that he was on to his job. "I'm doin' me own business."

As nothing could be accomplished in the presence of such infallible assurance, silence and obedience prevailed on to the sergeant's desk at the station. There the telephone brought release to the captive, who at once hired an automobile and hurried back to the scene of his investigation, but the big hat and

the object of its pursuit were nowhere discoverable in that region. Neither could anyone be found who had seen any one of the description given by the inquirer.

"Molly may be right," philosophized the defeated solver of human perplexities. "Science has little chance for success when Fate is around."

The next morning Rig Veda called to tell Uncle Jeremiah of his experience and the consequent fears. He found the old man just leaving the hotel for a visit to Pickup at the Sanitarium. The visitor invited him into his car. They would go together and talk on the way.

They drove up to the Sanitarium just as Pickup arrived from an all-night's visit out at a boy scouts' camp near the Twin Peaks. His task was about done with Nugget because that worthy friend was now restored to good health and a sound mind, excepting that he was still weak and easily exhausted.

They went up to the office together for the customary permission to visit the patient's room. There they were informed that Nugget had gone out the evening before, after receiving a note delivered by a woman, and had not yet returned.

With this unaccountable news, they went up to his room and found it had been left hur-

riedly and had not since been occupied. They searched the place in vain for some clue to this unexplainable conduct, until Rig Veda found a scrap of paper that had fallen under the edge of the bed. He smoothed it out and read aloud:

"Lew Havron: Your daughter Paquita has come to the Exposition and got lost in the city. The lady bringing you this note will be waiting at the corner south of your place to take you to her. Money is expected for the trouble."

There was no signature but the initials "O. S." Uncle Jeremiah was startled with the first words of the note. He seemed uncertain of his ears and asked to see the paper.

"Lew Havron, father of Paquita," he exclaimed. "He is my nephew. What does this mean?"

A nurse appeared at the door.

"I was the one who took the note from the woman," she explained, "and I could only get a glimpse of her, but I thought she looked like an Indian woman."

"'O. S.' means Ogallalla Sue," exclaimed Pickup. "That means Val Hone. He threatened once to get revenge by taking Nugget's daughter and stealing his gold mine. It looks like he had started in to do it."

"Let's get into my car at once," said Rig

Veda to Uncle Jeremiah. "We must set all the machinery of the law immediately at work. Now watch me beat them all and make good that I am some detective."

XI.

FATE MANIPULATES ANOTHER CHANCE.

Paquita heard some one say early in her first visit to the Fair grounds that no one could claim to have seen all the sights and leave out Chinatown. It was Paquita's ambition to see all the sights before she surrendered to the boss system. Therefore, however sick she was of the job of going-it-alone, she still held to the resolution of seeing first of all the sights as a free woman of the Arizona plains.

In the satisfied and complacent feeling of having vindicated herself and at least partially conquered, she came upon this final sight-seeing expedition, over the hill on Grant Avenue, from which she could see down the long, galloping aisles of Chinese buildings.

The fat, round-faced keepers of the bazaars who followed at her heels as she went around among the goods, the chalk-faced, statue-like figures she discovered to be fashionably equipped feminines, and the slant-eyed, romping youngsters flitting around in

unperceivable interests, all impressed her into breathless observation.

As she wandered on, a number of children caught her sight, playing in the edge of a small park down the hill at her right. As she turned and walked down that way to see more of them she noticed a man clothed like a Mexican mountaineer coming across the street she had left, as if to take the opposite side of the street she was now on. Her instinct of fear was very sensitive. She hastened forward and turned the corner quickly where she hid so she could watch what he was doing. He crossed over to her side and quickened his steps as if to keep her in sight. His familiar figure grew more distinct and she soon became sure that it was Val Hone. Her sole idea now was not in going somewhere but in getting out of his sight. With the instinct of a pioneer on the plains pursued by a savage, she lost sight of everything in the one idea of throwing him off the trail. She first tried the experiment of doubling on her track, but he always appeared at the corners commanding a long view which she could not cross. Then she decided to lose him by a zigzag course that would keep him puzzled and give her time to get out of his range of vision and away from him. This appeared to work admirably, and she had not

seen her pursuer for several blocks, when she emerged before the car tracks beyond which was the long row of sheds composing the slips and docks for the boats of the bay.

A freight train was coming and she hurried over to get that friendly obstruction between her and her enemy. As she stood looking at the cars go by in an unframed mind what to do next, frequent shouts of laughter came from one of the landing places, indicating

that a number of boys and girls were having a hilarious time. It made her heartsick for companionship, though she realized that companionship meant distasteful mutualities and irksome restrictions.

The last freight car passed by when her thoughts on what to do next were cut short by seeing the man of the broad-brim hat turn from a corner of a building across the way and come directly toward her. Panic-stricken, she ran through the doorway into the warehouse dock toward where she had heard the voices. She saw a large launch with a lot of gay young people crowded to the front. They were a party of happy juniors from the University of California. The man who unloosened the boat from the pier had just stepped aboard and the water was churning into a foam as the boat began to move along the side of the landing. Like a close-pursued fox, looking for anything promising safety, she ran forward and sprang on board. When the boat was a few hundred yards away she saw the broadbrim come out at the point where the boat had been stationed and look after her. While she was looking at her pursuer, fascinated with the undefined experience of her escape, a chorus of voices broke in upon her.

"Ho! He! Ho!" was the nautical cry, "a

stowaway on our good ship. A young lady. What shall we do with her?"

Some clamored to throw her overboard. Others, more merciful, said that she could work her passage over the stormy seas to the first port in the ship's passage. After much wrangling the merciful suggestion prevailed and they asked her what she could do to pay her way. She had understood the bantering and badinage from the start and entered into the mood of it with youthful pleasure.

"I can dance," was her laconic answer.

Nothing could be more desirable. She should dance for the cost of her passage over to the far distant shores. The decks were cleared for action, so to speak, and the debutante invited forth. But at the first dash they were taken by surprise. They had expected nothing more than some ridiculous gyrating at which they could laugh and over which they could amuse themselves as a lucky episode for their pastime.

The little girl came whirling forward in a Spanish dance that took her at a leap in their estimation from something to ridicule to the place of a beloved idol. At the conclusion the girls smothered her with kisses and the boys gathered around them unsatisfied because conventionality allowed them nothing better to offer than cheers, even if it could have

been true that they had anything better. It was unanimously voted with additional cheers that she had paid in full for her passage over.

To all their questions, who she was, how she came to be aboard, and where she was going, she answered that it was not to be told till the next day, as she was playing a joke on her friends. As to her name, they should call her till then by her mother's name, Anita. As to her place for the night, she would like to stay with one of these girls. Would she? It was a quarrel all the way to the university grounds who should have her. Peace was restored only when it was agreed that they should consider her a guest among some select girls chosen from their set to see her dance that evening. They arrived at the grounds, but before they separated from their impromptu conference under one of the big Le Conte live-oaks of the campus a suggestion of more extended interest was adopted. In the afternoon following the class was to have an entertainment known as the dance of all nations on the floor of the great Greek Theatre. Where could they find anything for the Spanish dance that could equal Anita? It was a lucky find. The little girl would be kept secret as a surprise for the coming day.

That night after only such a festive expe-

rience as vivacious Junior girls can provide, an elaborate Spanish dancing costume was improvised. It was gorgeous and fanciful enough to delight any taste for Castilian display in the whirl of draperies and the clink of castanets.

Meanwhile a telephone message from the Fair grounds to the Green Tree Hotel had made an appointment for Captain Mulford to take Miss Merrilee over to Berkeley to see an open air dance given by the Juniors in the university. One of the guards who was a Junior there had insisted that his captain take his best girl and go over for a good show and an all-around pleasant afternoon.

On learning of this arrangement, Molly thought it a good time, while all were away, for her to have a good sleep for most of the afternoon. But only a few minutes elapsed after Merrilee's departure when the call of the wild came upon her. She could now and then have a sleep through the afternoon back at the farm. What was the use to waste precious time in this region of prophecy? She must do her part or destiny might also rest on its job.

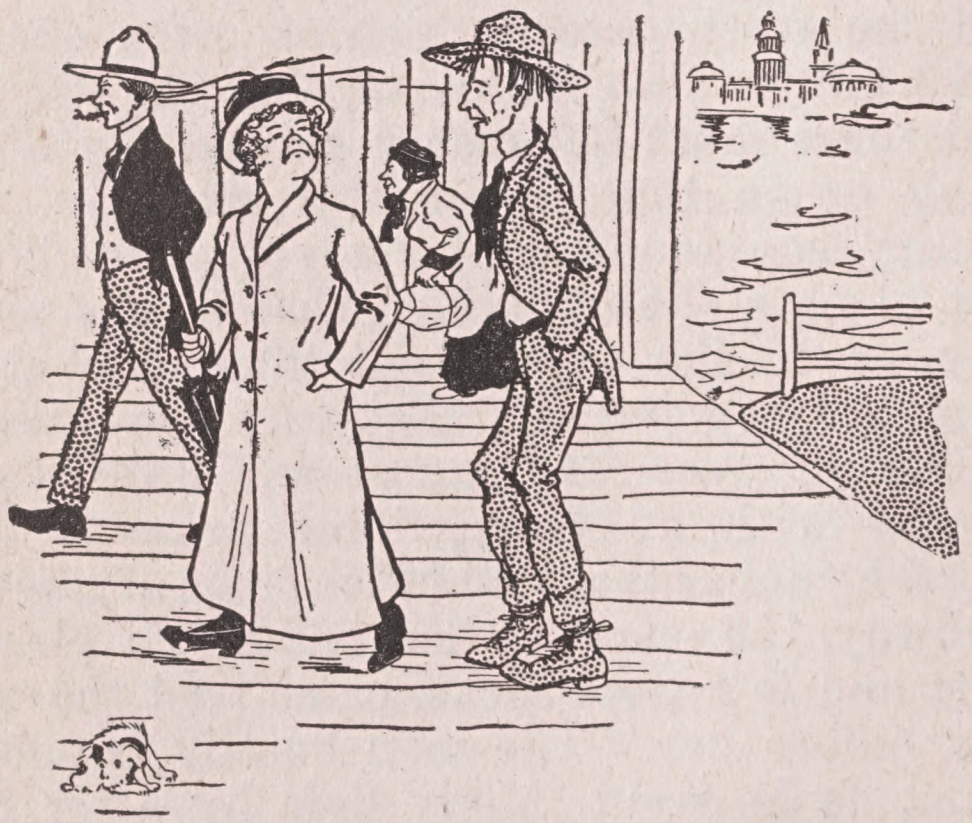
Street cars were utterly untamable creatures for Molly. They came and went whereever they pleased. She had often yelled "Whoa!" and "Ho!" when she wanted one

of them to stop, but the thing didn't even have horse sense. One fact, however, she had learned, and that was that most of them took her around the loop at the ferry if she stayed on long enough. She decided that there could be no more interesting afternoon for her than to go down to the ferry and watch the crowds and the boats.

Fate was again working in a mysterious way its wonders to perform. She saw such vast numbers every few minutes filling up the waiting room between the ticket wickets and the ferry gates, which as often opened and let them into the boats, that she decided that there must be some very exciting affair going on in that direction somewhere. On inquiry she found that ferry tickets didn't cost much and she decided that it was probably worth the experiment to find what so many were going out that way for. While pondering over the question, Fate came around with an indisputable reason. The broad-brim hat that had twice come across her pathway, the one that had under it a pleated shirt and low wool socks, came past the window before her. The man hastily bought a ticket as he went. Molly flew by after him as if a puff of wind had taken her across through the same act. She kept him in sight as he went on to the boat and when he was

gloomily seated on the upper deck she found a comfortable place where she could gaze on him as the tried and proven gift of Fate.

How noble and kind he looked! Undoubtedly he was a leader in righteousness and good works. If anything now intervened in this new evidence of prophesied Fate, it was sure because she had not treated the gypsy prophetess right. She should not have ridiculed the gypsy's foresight nor failed to have caught the bantam rooster in proper payment for the benevolent vision of the good woman.



In the midst of her admiring, world-excluding reflections, she heard a full, heaving sigh at her side. Her startled glance encountered

a face beaming with the fullness of joy upon her. It was again the farm lover who had threatened "to foller" her around, "plague take it," and was succeeding in his threat.

The apparition of Ab at her side overawed her. Could a human being be as persistent as Fate? It looked so.

The passengers had all arisen to go ashore. She gave the two men some swift glances of comparison, and then with a look of withering scorn upon the inferior one at her side, she wriggled away through the crowd with the leading interest of keeping in view the broad hat that had pressed its way well to the front. It would not be her fault if Fate fell from grace and destiny was defeated.

XII.

WHEN FATE PROVIDES AN OVER-ABUNDANCE.

Molly saw the broadbrim board a car which she could not get, but she got the next one, and took her chances by leaving it where most of the passengers seemed to have had enough for their half-dime. The young folks scattered ahead of her and she walked on along the broad driveway into the University campus. Ahead of her she saw a broad-brim hat and, with an instinct that was now almost a habit, she directed her steps that way. As she came up she noticed there was a group of a dozen broadbrims sitting on the lawn. Evidently Fate was bringing her where she could have an extended choice. The opportunity enlarged again. On her left there was another group of half a dozen broadbrims approaching and she began to feel uncomfortable in the midst of such a prodigality of Fate. And still they came! Another bunch appeared on her right. A score or more now came out of a building, and as if by common impulse turned her way. This was too much, even of a good thing. She ran by the mobilizing army of broadbrims on up the hill. As if

directed by superhuman design, the battalions of broadbrims began to move after her. Then she saw them appearing from every direction. The woods was full of them. It became a nightmare. The unpaid gypsy woman was indeed having her revenge or Fate had been too strongly invoked. Unable to undertake her part under such a profusion from the benevolence of responding destiny, she fled through an opening to which she came that looked like an alleyway between two buildings. She found herself between a row of chairs in the presence of a great crowd of people. There she fell back in a near seat in a dead faint. Before her was an amphitheatre of broadbrims intermixed with fluffy white creatures who seemed to have beat her to a selection by each of her broadbrim man. Tier on tier arose against the green background of the mountain in an oblong half-circle, around an arena reminding her of a circus she once attended, and she had just entered as the performers do in a circus. The thought overwhelmed her.

The innocent freshmen, who wore broadbrim hats as the badge of their educational rank, were gathering for one of their annual social affairs with no idea of furthering the foreordinations of any frolics decreed by Fate.

Captain Mulford and Merrilee had found

seats high up in the rear. As the bewildered broadbrim hunter reached the end of her journey, Merrilee caught a glimpse of her. How Molly had arrived there was the most amazing perplexity she had met west of the Rockies. But Fate has many tricks in its trade. Molly was perhaps one of the easiest.

The afternoon was balmy as only a California day can be and the tiers of seats were filled with a buzzing throng. Busy Juniors flitted back and forth over the rostrum and through the pit. The music began with characteristic folk songs and representative national dances. The printed program was now completed and no surprise had yet been sprung, but the bustling figures under the great archway indicated that the expected was about to arrive.

A fluffy figure, in the midst of the final music, came tripping into view from behind the columns, and stopped for a bow before the welcoming applause. Then it flitted down to the dancing floor and began to skip about to the clink of castanets and the melodious ripples of a single guitar. After the dizzy whirl was concluded she bowed to the vociferous applause, ran up the steps to the stage, flitted around under the archway, bowed again to the uproarious students and disappeared around the great columns in the rear.

The good-night chorus was drowned out with the persistent encore, but nothing availed to bring back the little Spanish dancer.

When the chorus ended and the audience began to disperse Merrilee tried to find Molly, but Molly wanted to see the Green Tree Hotel. Fate was playing jokes on her. It was an undignified thing for Fate to do. Between the persistence of Ab and the host of broadbrims the intentions of Fate seemed too complicated for the proper conduct of an ordinary mortal. She wanted to give it up and go back to the farm.

As Captain Mulford and Merrilee reached the ground a young woman ran up and handed her a note, not waiting for any answer. Surprised that she was the object of a note, she held it up so that they read it together.

"Dear Cousin Merrilee:

"This is the biggest birthday I ever had. I hope you liked my dancing. Some girls and boys are taking me in an automobile to the ferry so I can get to the campfire girls before night. I know how to go. I think it's better to surrender to the ones I escaped from. They will feel better to deliver me to my dear relatives in the morning. Besides, I want to tell them that I can take care of myself and

see all the sights. I just know we'll like each other whole heaps.

"Your Cousin Paquita."

"Talking about phantoms," exclaimed Mulford, "that little cousin of yours has 'em all skinned a mile."

As the people began to move away Molly surged forward toward the front of the crowd with but one leading idea, and that was how to escape the broadbrims and arrive at the quiet and safe retreat of her own room. She reached the gate of the campus, where there was an automobile marked for hire standing waiting at the curbstone for a customer. It occurred to her that the street cars here might be as crazy as over in the city, with the chances of landing her anywhere else besides the ferry. She was more familiar with what could be done with a chauffeur in an automobile. Her decision was made without debate. She opened the door and climbed into the car. The half-asleep chauffeur was hardly aware of having a passenger until she called out sharply, "I want to go straight to the ferry." He grasped his wheel and turned to look at his fare when a man came rushing out of the campus and across the road to the machine. He was shaking a five dollar bill toward the chauffeur and yelling "Get me to the ferry

before the next boat leaves and you get this. I'll pay all fines for speed."

Without waiting for the consent required, where it takes two to make a bargain, or giving any attention whatever whether the vehicle contained another passenger, perhaps desiring to go elsewhere, he sprang into the front and took his seat by the driver. As the chauffeur had never before experienced such a whirlwind passenger, the proposition did not quickly come to order in muscular action. But the broadbrim man was in a hurry. He caught the fellow by the shoulder and gave him a good wake-up shake. Then there was an interruption. Another contestant entered the arena.

"Hey, there!" cried an excited voice, "you trying to run away with that lady? I'll cook yer goose fer you. Plague take it! you old plague. Nobody but me kin elope with Molly."

Ab sprang upon the footboard just as the machine gave a lurch forward. It flung him off. But he was not to be foiled. As the rear of the machine swung around he made a leap for the tire lashed behind, caught it, and perched himself upon the rim like a toad in a round picture frame.

Molly was in an ecstasy of expectation. Fate was indeed kind to her. Here was this glorious man forced to meet her in divers

places against his own thought-out plans. The difficulties disturbing their harmonious meeting were doubtless due to the inharmonious way in which she had treated the prophecy and the prophetess back at the farm.

She tried in various ways to get his attention, so she could explain away her attack on him in the Fair grounds, but the vigorous leaps and bounds of the machine prevented anything getting across to him. In an incredibly short time they bumped up against the end of their journey at the ferry. Ab crawled off unobserved at the side as the whirlwind passenger stood up in the car and cursed his luck at seeing the boat drawing away from the bridge too late for him to get aboard. Molly stepped out and waited in feverish expectation as the noble-looking man stood erect and voiced his passion at the luck running so hard against his will. Then a small launch with the motorman idly smoking at the machine caught his attention. He got down out of the automobile as an idea was collecting its forces in his mind, and stood for a brief moment absorbed in thought. This was the psychological moment Fate had planned in order to give Molly a chance. She took the chance.

"O Mr. Niceman," she exclaimed, laying a

soft touch on his arm, "you'll forgive me when you know why I knocked off your hat and slapped your face in the Fair grounds."

The all-important idea struggling to come clear in his mind was beclouded by the interference of sounds coming into his ears from the voice butting into his reverie. His rage

turned at once into ridicule as he saw the insignificant cause of the disturbance before him.

"Hello, honey!" he exclaimed, chucking her under the chin. "You're a beauty, sure, but I ain't out on no love affair just now. Put it off a few days and I'm your honey boy."

Molly was rather taken back with his unexpected sweetness mixed with the sternness of pressing business. So was Ab. He was boiling till the steam was about to cause a blow-off if not a boiler explosion. The chucking under the chin with the honey words was more than he could be expected to endure.

Val Hone turned as his eyes were searching out a way to get down to the launch. But there was another interruption to his process of thinking. Ab stood before him drawn up like a Chinese idol about to enter a death grapple with Fate.

"She's a leddy," he vehemently asserted. "You've got to pollygize. If I do tend a farm stable I won't let no San Frisky man 'sult a leddy."

Molly stood back as if a ghost had suddenly appeared before her. How did he get there? Val Hone seemed to comprehend. He opened his palm and pushed back Ab's face about three yards. This mode of attack was so unexpected that Ab came erect, sputtering with astonishment and rage. Val Hone turned again from such insignificant, if not unaccountable, interruptions, and took a step toward the launch. Ab locked the fingers of his hands together and brought his arms down over the enemy's shoulders like a hoop, which he instantly tightened to a vise,

thus pinning Val Hone's arms helplessly to his side. Then the farmer stableman leaned backward, lifting the fellow off of his feet, kicking and struggling like a goat. In this form Ab carried his captive to the edge of the bridge and let him drop. The wrathful enemy struck the waist-deep water with a huge splash and then bounded toward the shore directly alongside the launch. With another jump he was inside the boat giving orders to the motorman. This worthy workman was so astonished to see a passenger coming up to him out of the depths of the bay that he could understand little more of the man's English than if it had been ancient Chinese. But a few rough shakes from the dripping passenger brought it clear that the launch was commandeered to take him across to the city. The machine came slowly into operation and the boat backed off from the shore and gathered speed for the other side. The last the crowd saw of the passenger was that he was appropriating, against the protests of the motorman, the dry clothing that the boatman had kept with him there for a change.

The crowd was not certain of the episode. They could not get it quite clear whether they stood in the presence of a hero or a fool. The patrolman who arrived on the scene did

not accept either theory. Somebody had broken the peace. One of the parties to the violation was gone and irreclaimable, the other stood looking after the eccentric offender as a cur dog does after a jack rabbit that has suddenly made up its mind that it has ambled along far enough in the process of teasing its bulky pursuer.

So the officer laid a heavy hand on Ab and Ab submitted meekly before the majesty of the law.

Seeing that the crowd did not look upon the arrest as either very necessary or very heroic, the officer asked for explanations. Molly couldn't make explanations. She did not dare thus to give away the secrets of Fate. She wriggled away through the crowd to avoid being mixed up in the scandal of having two men fighting about her. Just as she emerged from the crowd a street car came up and unloaded its passengers. Captain Mulford helped Merrilee out and as she turned about Molly caught sight of her. Joyfully she ran up to her friend with an outburst of wrought-up feelings.

"O me! O my!" she exclaimed, rapturously. "I have just passed through such gorgeous excitement. I have just had such superhuman experiences."

At this point the officer came marching out with Ab.

This was a stunning vision. Merrilee did not know that Ab would venture anywhere a dozen miles from the farm. But there was no time to question how he got there. The thing now was, what had he done?

Ab was overjoyed as a shepherd dog to see its master coming to its rescue.

"Officer, what has he done?" inquired Merrilee solicitously.

The officer stopped and looked her over.

The approval was thoroughly sanctioned when Mulford stepped over with her.

"Do you know him?" cautiously asked the officer.

"Yes, sir," she replied promptly. "He has charge of our stables on the farm."

"Then, to answer your question," continued the officer, "I can't find out exactly what he has done."

"If you have no use for him," Merrilee said hopefully, "turn him over to us. He has always had a good character."

"Glad to do it, lady," replied the officer, "glad to do it."

He walked away, leaving Ab happy by the side of Molly. The next ferry boat took them back to the city.

XIII.

THE CLAIRVOYANT DETECTIVE BUREAU.

Lew Havron did not answer with full confidence the summons to come to his daughter. The reference to money impressed him as not being like an honest invitation. The woman he found at the corner only strengthened his suspicion concerning the chances for a trap. He could not induce her to speak more than monosyllables. The guttural tone of her limited replies betrayed to his practiced ear the voice of an Indian, or at least half-breed woman. He watched her closely. She would not let him walk behind her and she refused to let him walk near her. He kept to the outer edge of the sidewalk and carefully moved around any dark corners where an enemy might lie in wait. The impression began to prevail with him that the note brought to him was unreasonable.

When fully possessed of that idea, he continued on until he came to a well-lighted space where no one following could make an attack from any near hiding place, then he stopped her by standing out before her.

"My child is not in this part of the town,"

he said very decisively, "unless she has been stolen, and I don't believe that has happened. Now you'd better tell me what this means.

It will be easy to find you, and if anything happens to my child, you will get the punishment."

The woman stood like a post without a word or sign of understanding. Havron left her and returned the way they had come, using the same precautions against assault from anyone following. When sure of being out of sight, he ran around the block, keeping

well in the dark, and then came up in an alley ahead of where he had left the woman. He saw her just as she turned into an alley in the next block. He had never followed a trail like this, but he had experience enough to know that he must be exceedingly cautious if he succeeded in trailing an Indian woman who probably suspected just what he was doing. Her method of taking a zigzag course and of making sundry spurts of speed through dark places soon made it clear that she did not intend for anyone to succeed in following her.

He was almost exhausted and felt as if he would be unable to follow her another block up the steep hill she was now climbing, when she turned down the basement steps of an old building which looked as if it had never attempted to recover from some ancient assault of the fire department. This was evidently merely a temporary place for her, quite suited, he believed, for a criminal hiding place.

A dim light could be seen far back in one of the series of underground rooms. In endeavoring to follow nearer he found the outer doors locked, but at the side there was a hallway in which the glass was so broken from the door that by careful manipulation he succeeded in making the opening large

enough for him to crawl through. He soon arrived at the far end of the hall and found that he was next to the room in which he could see the woman dimly outlined through the thick corrugated glass. It was with great relief that he became sure she was alone, and that the message had been framed up for someone to get him into a trap.

The end of the hall was filled up to her door with huge boxes, and he found that he could hide in one of them with his head near the small open space above the door, where he could observe everything of use to him that might occur. If any evil really threatened his daughter, he would have here the surest chance to learn of it, and he remained patiently in his hiding place all night.

The next morning the woman went away and he kept the place in view all day until her return about sundown. As she had no one with her, the mystery of the attempt to induce him to go with her remained still unsolved. He had about decided that it was no longer worth his attention when the plot began to unfold.

He heard some one come tumbling down the dark hall and so at once fixed himself for discreet observation from his box. A special signal was given at the door and the half-breed woman opened it, letting the light

shine full on his old enemy, Val Hone. The visitor went inside, produced a bottle of whiskey, and they both took a drink preliminary to the exchange of important news. There was an interruption to Havron's attention. A shuffling sound so light that Havron could hardly be sure it was a real thing fell upon his ears from the near hallway. Then it continued on up to the box where he was and came by his side. He could see a head moving up close to his by the side of the open space over the door. Some one else had an interest in that conference. A thin streak of light played over the man's face as he moved his head for a view of the interior and Havron saw that the prominent points in the sharp features were dark eyes and coal black hair. He would surely know him if he ever saw him again. But the conspirators were exchanging their news and the new observer was listening as intently as Havron.

The half-breed woman told of her failure to trap Havron. Val Hone replied that it made no difference, as the next day they would have the girl. He had just followed her from across the bay on to a street car. He overheard enough to learn that one of her girl friends, while coming across the bay with her, had persuaded the girl to go home with her over night for a visit that evening to

the theatre. The next day they would go sight-seeing over to the camp of the campfire girls. This proposed trip would take Paquita within half a mile of the place where the two conspirators had their goods stored. His plot was to supply them with a guide who would be bribed to take the girl up to the storehouse and leave her there on some pretext. To carry out the plan, they must both go back that night so as to make their arrangements early the next day.

Havron noticed that his nearby listener was writing something on a sheet of paper which he placed in an envelope. This he dexterously flung through the narrow slit over the door so that it struck the ceiling with a sharp sound and fell down upon the head of the man. The stranger then slipped away like a shadow. Val Hone and the woman gazed at the envelope as at a phantom messenger. They looked around to see whence it could have come, but from where they stood they could not see the slit over the door, and it seemed to have fallen through the ceiling. The letter looked like a very material thing, but it did not appear to have come from any material source. Val Hone suddenly bethought himself. He ran out into the hallway and down to the front. Then he came back and looked through the boxes, but fortunately for Havron did not

look into the smaller box resting upon the big one against the wall by the door. Then he went back into the room, somewhat subdued, and read the letter.

"Call on the clairvoyant with this note, at Vevay and Cross streets, at noon, as your desire for the mine is felt among your spirit friends, and will be fulfilled, if advice there given is fulfilled."

Astonishment and superstition confused them into silence. Then they agreed that the summons from the other world was clear enough. They must obey it and get their reward. Hastily gathering up her effects into a bundle, the man and woman turned out the light and as hurriedly departed.

Wondering what could be in the letter thus to affect his old enemy and the half-breed confederate, Havron followed them a couple of blocks, where there was an automobile standing, into which the two climbed and drove away.

The next day about the middle of the forenoon, when Merrilee was before the mirror putting the finishing touches upon her toilet, and Molly was adjusting the room, she was suddenly startled by an envelope striking the glass before her and falling with a clatter among the articles spread out upon the stand.

"Carelessness," she cried, somewhat in-

censed toward the busy caretaker, "what made you do that?"

Molly did not know what she meant.

Merrilee, seeing that it was a sealed envelope, opened it and with rising curiosity read:

"A gentleman will appear at eleven-thirty to take you to call on a clairvoyant, where you will hear some definite news about Paquita."

"Where did that message come from?" she inquired, rather fiercely. But Molly knew nothing about it. Merrilee ran to the door and opened it. No one was to be seen. It was puzzling, to say the least. But she didn't enjoy puzzles, especially when there was no thread to begin on in the unraveling. Therefore, she decided to wait the coming of the gentleman.

At the moment foretold for the escort to appear, Rig Veda came in smiling with the expression of one who has come by an appointment that needs no explaining.

She looked at him curiously.

"I got your message," she said, with a questioning intonation of her voice.

"Very well," he replied. "Then you are ready for a very interesting experience."

As if the episode was a very natural occurrence and needed no further reference, they

passed to other topics, and were soon on their way to the house of the clairvoyant. The frontage of the clairvoyant's apartments bore many signs of temporary occupancy. It was emblazoned with many mind-wrecking signs, calculated to inspire credulity and excite the imagination of believing patrons. A diminutive and mystically decorated son of India ushered them into an inner shrine of soft lights, oriental rugs and undulating walls of somber tapestries.

Merrilee had an abundance of curiosity, but she held it well in control. If Rig Veda wanted to explain he could do so, if not, she

would await developments. She was given a seat in one of the center rooms made by the partitions of draperies and Rig Veda excused himself.

Each of these little square rooms had a round table and two chairs very nearly filling the room. It seemed to place the seeker for foresight into very exclusive nearness to the mystic symbols, closely en rapport with the clairvoyant.

Presently some one was placed in the adjoining square. The clairvoyant began talking. Merrilee soon became aware that it was the voice of Rig Veda. After numerous clever preliminary pauses and enlightening responses from the seeker for truth, the vision began:

"I see one whom you hate in the mountains among the rocks. He finds a rich mine of free gold in nuggets. You desire him to tell you. I see a man following an Indian woman to a room in a basement opening from a hallway with many boxes. But no, the man refuses to go all the way. A girl with a mind related to the man is in the woods of big trees. A guide leads her from the rest and they appear to be lost. He takes her to a hut among the rocks and tells her to wait while he climbs up on a higher point to see where

they are. She goes in and the door is closed upon her by a woman who is a half-breed."

"That'll do," cried the man in a heavy whisper. "What I pay extra money for is how to make the man tell where the mine is. He owes it to me."

Merrilee saw that the room he was in was suddenly darkened by a black velvet lid coming down over it. There was some kind of ghastly display within. She could see the fitful flashes of light through the tapestry.

"Yes, yes, you know everything," she heard the man say in a low breath. "I'll do as you say. But he owes it to me and I'll keep her in Pine Cone Hill till he tells me where the mine is."

"My vision now divides," said the clairvoyant. "I see two ways. One is disastrous because done by violence, the other is easy through secret wisdom. One way the child is kept hidden to force the man to exchange his mine for her. Then I see a man and a woman killed in a mob riot as they are being taken to prison. The other way, a clairvoyant goes to the girl and through her mind reads her father's mind and finds what is desired. Such a chance will come this afternoon and the visitors will be welcome if the wise way is preferred to the worst fate. The secret will be read from the mind of the child and told to

the Indian woman. You must not be near or her mind will be too much disturbed by your presence for any reading. You can get the secret from the woman."

Val Hone appeared to be in a dream. The voice ceased, the curtain parted and the clairvoyant withdrew. The lid of black velvet lifted and the room was suffused with a mild light. The man arose unsteadily to his feet and walked on out of the house like one dizzy with drink.

As he passed through the door, Rig Veda appeared at the curtain and made a bow to Merrilee.

"I'm a hero poet," he began grandiloquently. "I am also some detective. You have seen that I can also make an impression as a clairvoyant. Now what do you say to the rest of the adventure? I'll disguise a husky policeman as chauffeur and we'll rescue the wayward and willful Paquita."

The idea was fascinating.

"Let us go at once," cried the eager young woman.

And they went.

XIV.

HEROISM AS A FINE ART.

Molly boarded the boat from her adventures in the University hills with a decided slump in enthusiasm. She sat moodily apart ruminating on the vicissitudes that attended her attempts to do her part in the game of Fate. At the ferry landing, Abner Bean sorrowfully went his way, struggling likewise with the mystery of social goods, so happy in exchange and so miserable when left to grow stale alone. He could not solve the problem though he could feel the social waste as keenly as anyone.

After Mulford had left them at the hotel, Merrilee felt somewhat wearied and asked Molly to have a pot of tea sent up to her room. Molly never became conspicuous except when she saw an opening to be in the lead, and then she endeavored to fill the whole stage of action. Merrilee had only to press the button of some need and Molly at once assumed to be generalissimo of the entire situation.

Mollie became busy at her trunk and Merrilee was soon somewhat impatient.

"Did you hear me ask you to get me a pot of tea?" she inquired.

"That's what I'm doing now," was the puzzling reply.

"A pot of tea, I said," Merrilee responded quite exasperated at her stupidity. "You surely can't get a pot of tea from your trunk."

"Take a look at my foresight," replied Molly, bringing forth a chafing dish and a bag of tea. "I expected you to want good tea some time and the home made is the best. Knowing that no one can beat me making tea, I brought along your shaving dish and in a jiffy we'll have the best tea in town. Then while it's getting ready I'll run down to the fruit stand and get us some of those fine sweet corncob grapes. Then we'll feel like spring chickens at sunup."

Over a cup of tea all the world may become confidential, but Molly, usually so loquacious, was now silent, if not touchy, on everything relating to her own recent eccentric and unsuccessful conduct. Therefore, she was left to her feelings and no further molested on so sore a subject. To be sure, in affairs of the heart, no words have ever yet been invented that can pierce through the outer defenses intended to preserve love's freedom to seek its own, and Molly was not only serving her own desires but also fulfilling Fate.

The next day when the mysterious letter

clattered down upon Merrilee's dressing table, inviting her to visit a clairvoyant for second-sight visions of a lost girl, the idea flashed in upon Molly with illuminating effect, why should she not seek through the clairvoyant to find the whereabouts of a lost man? Doubtless all this time Fate had held waiting for her a message that would have made all thing easy.

In the midst of these thoughts, a boy brought in the morning paper. She reached up to lay it on the chiffonier when a pink sheet slipped from the folds and fluttered to the floor. It was the advertisement of a beauty doctor.

"Why remain unattractive?"

That was the headline which stared up at her in big letters. The lesser display lines were equally interesting.

"You can be beautiful and winning."

If Merrilee's letter was a manifestation of spirit forces, this was no less a message to her from a supernatural guide. Of course, if other women could be made more attractive, so could she. The art of beauty with the help of Fate would make sure that the broadbrim man could not defeat his own destiny.

Within five minutes after Merrilee had left the room with Rig Veda, Molly was in a taxi-

cab holding up before the driver her pink-sheet advertisement of the beauty shop. He understood and very soon delivered her at the professional art parlor which was to give a boost to destiny.

She did not know what she wanted except that the promise of the pink-sheet should be fulfilled upon her person. The proprietor understood and she left nothing undone that could be put upon the applicant and into the bill. When the itemized account was placed before her for settlement, its proportions were somewhat staggering, but when she looked at herself in the glass, the vision she beheld was undoubtedly worth it.

And now, how to use this newly acquired attractiveness was the immediate question. It was her duty to ask of the mysteries, even the angels could do no more. She had the address of the clairvoyant, and as she could not trust the erratic street cars, she called a cab.

As she approached the block in which the house of prophecy and fortune was situated, she was suddenly thrilled at the sight of a broad-brim man coming out of the clairvoyant's door. He walked hurriedly on toward the next street. Could it be that her man had been impelled by the mysterious forces to seek information concerning her even as she

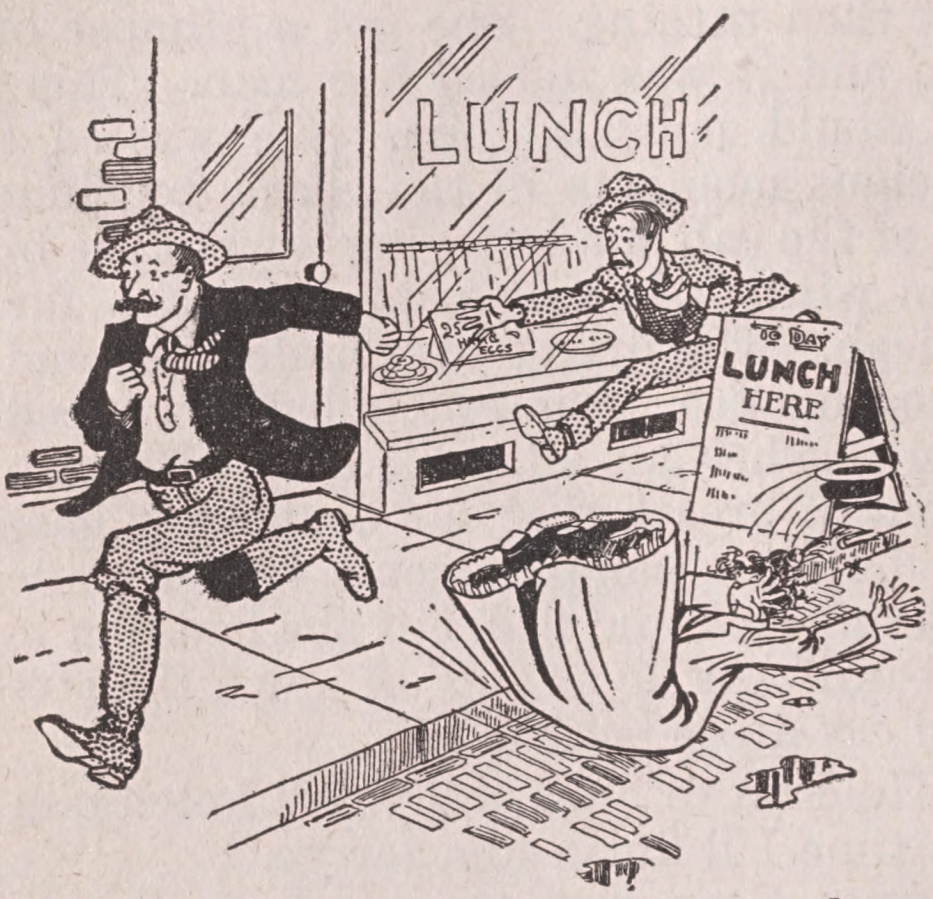
was coming to seek information about him. Surely, this play of Fate was thrilling.

She yelled to the driver to take her on to the next corner around which the figure was just then turning. She got a glimpse of his face and it was indeed her man. This time she would not lose him. She wasted some precious moments in the chase by jumping out of the cab and hurrying toward the broad-brim without having paid her fare for the taxicab. The driver overhauled her and collected his fee. She redoubled her speed and soon reached his adorable side. But she was so out of breath that she could only gasp unintelligible accompaniments to her smile. He took one look and fled, but she had him by the coat-tail. As he swung off down the street, a wild cry arose behind her.

"Hold on to him, Molly. I'll ketch him and this time I'll finish him fer ye."

Abner Bean was coming down the middle of the street like a race horse. The voice so unnerved Molly that she loosened her hold and tumbled into the gutter. Val Hone saw his unaccountable enemy in a spurt of speed after him. His skill at dodging came into good use for him. He stepped into a hallway near the corner and Abner dashed by. At the corner, the irate pursuer found he was off of the trail. His intended victim was nowhere

in sight. He ran down to the next street to get a more extended view. Then Val Hone came out, turned back to the alley and was lost to view.



Molly saw him as he turned into the alley. She ran over to a messenger boy who had stopped to laugh at her.

"There you are! I know you," exclaimed Molly. "You're Roy Jones of the quick message service. Give me pancil and paper and do it quick."

The boy thus recognized hastily produced the desired articles.

She hurriedly wrote a line.

"There now," she said in a satisfied tone, as she folded the note and gave it to him. "You saw that man go down the alley. You chase him on that wheel. If you don't ketch him and give him this note, I'll blow you up for the way you talked to me when I was a lost soul, needing to be saved. If you give it to him, come around to the Green Tree Hotel and Uncle Jeremiah will give you a dollar."

The boy under such dire threat and for such a promised reward, mounted his wheel and took after the broadbrim which he could see bobbing along with considerable speed in the distance.

Molly called to her taxicab man who had been curiously watching the scene. She shut the door upon herself just as Abner came puffing back around the corner to tell Molly that their mutual enemy had again escaped him. But Molly had disappeared also and he gave it up as a mystery too deep for ordinary minds.

Roy Jones came up behind Val Hone, calling out to him and waving the note. The man received it with incredulous interest.

He read: "Don't fight Fate, but get beauty and fortune intended for you from the foundation of the world. Inquire 614 Green Tree Hotel."

Val Hone turned to question the boy but that valiant hustler was then out upon the next street. Val Hone studied the thing. He was a firm believer in luck and he didn't want to miss any chances. A good gambler never fails to weigh with precision his list of chances and luck. Without doubt he must investigate. To be sure he ought to be out with the Indian woman watching for the clairvoyant who was to read the father's secrets through the mind of the child, but the gamble for immediate results lay favorably toward seeing what this beauty and fortune could be that had been his from the foundation of the world. He believed the Indian woman could attend to the clairvoyant visitor. He remembered that the sightseer had said that his influence should not be present to disturb the harmonious equilibrium necessary between the mind of the child and its father. Also, it had been foretold that he would get the secret of the mine of nuggets from the Indian woman to whom it would be revealed by the clairvoyant. Enough said! He would investigate the mystery of the Green Tree Hotel.

Val Hone and the messenger boy arrived about the same time, but the man had taken the precaution to change his clothing and otherwise alter his appearance to avoid recognition in so public a place. Roy Jones did not

know him. They came up to the door together and Val Hone recognized him as the bicycle boy who had given him the note. He took the boy aside and questioned him closely but the messenger boy knew nothing except that he had been told to come there and collect a dollar from an old man named Uncle Jeremiah.

While they were talking, Val Hone saw an unwelcome vision. He became greatly disturbed over the presence of a rather stalwart figure coming stalking lazily up to the entrance before which they were standing. It was Abner, his unaccountable enemy. Abner caught sight of the boy and picked up considerable interest.

"Say, ain't you the kid I seen laughing at a leddy about an hour ago? What'r you 'round here for?"

The boy braced up.

"I'm here for getting a dollar for carrying a note from the lady who wiped up the ditch with herself to this gentleman here who was then streaking it up the alley."

Abner got a look at the man indicated by the boy. So unexpectedly finding his enemy right at hand confused his automatic action. He tried to hit the fellow with both fists and kick him with both feet. Val Hone preferred not to wait for the natural regularity to get back into his enemy's limbs. He tried the

former successful trick of shoving Ab's face back two or three yards and succeeded. When Abner got to his feet, the enemy who fought so differently from anything he had ever experienced, was well up the street and increasing the distance at a rapid gait. Abner went after him but as usual the foxy fugitive soon disappeared, as if he had a way of making himself invisible whenever Abner was reaching after him at close range.

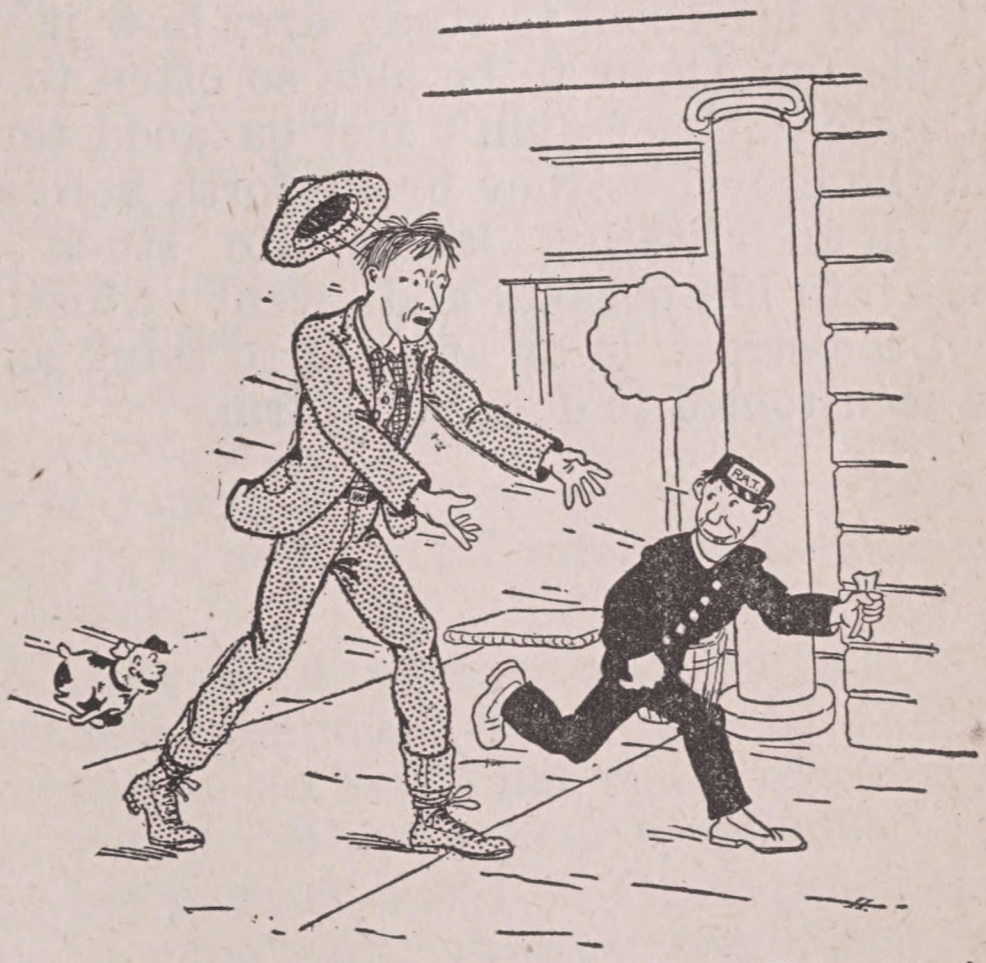
Roy Jones was much amused. He laughed so heartily that he soon had an inquiring crowd around him. Ab came back with feelings sorely ruffled. The laughing boy caught his attention. Such levity was adding insult to injury.

He pulled three or four nickels and half a dozen pennies from his pocket.

"Say," he said with a weighty attempt at fine sarcasm, as he poured the coins into the boy's hand, "there's big money fer yer little job. Now you git up and git, ur I'll make it so hot ye can't sit on yer bicycle."

Meanwhile, Molly had exercised herself in her room and around through the corridors and parlors in a high state of expectation concerning the effect of her note. Seeing the crowd collecting before the entrance, she instinctively took a cautious look out over them to see if it concerned her. It evidently did,

for there stood Abner Bean quarreling with someone. Her foreordained lover might be in danger from that pestiferous fellow from the farm. She descended in wrath upon him and the crowd gave way. Abner was giving his final instructions to Roy Jones when she burst into the scene.



"Here, boy, here's the dollar I promised you, if you give him the note," she sputtered between the embarrassment of such a crowd and the desire for good news. "Did you give it to him?"

"I did," replied the boy, "and he was here

just now to answer your note and this country lunatic drove him away."

Abner made a dive for the messenger boy, but the boy had a quick call for safety first, and he made good with a triumphant flourish of the dollar as he disappeared down the street. Molly slipped out of the crowd and back into her room to study over how it was possible for Abner to be able so often to defeat Fate. Abner didn't feel on good terms with the crowd as they broke forth here and there in an irritating laugh. He stuck his hands into his pockets and went whistling down the street, in an attempt to think as he was accustomed to do on the farm.

XV.

THE SHACK UNDER THE ROCKS.

Pickup was lost. That is, he was lost if such can be said of one who starts from nowhere and travels with no place to go. He had the feeling of being lost because every direction he chose to go appeared to be the wrong direction, and every place to which he came seemed to be the wrong place. All who have arrived at this state of mind, wherein everything seen to do looks in its turn to be the worst, understand that they have reached the bottom of existence where everything appears to be so bad that whatever is done must be better.

Nugget could not have gone far and he was certainly being dealt with foully by Val Hone somewhere, no doubt not many blocks away. And yet, it did not appear reasonable to him that his partner could be taken prisoner except in some very skillful confidence trap worked by the Indian woman. Therefore, he went down into the neighborhood of the docks, and up around the buildings in the high bluffs, believing that chance would be as likely to reveal a clue to him as the most elaborate plan.

In this aimless wandering all day through the vague belief of somewhere crossing the trail of his friend's enemy, he discovered that he was out of touch with everything familiar. Night came on. Then the stars vanished and the dim lights of the irregular streets kept him uncertain whether he was looking ahead into sea or sky. Few persons were to be seen, and he began searching for a place where he might hide and shelter himself, with some degree of comfort, in some kind of a position suitable to sleep. In this search, he came upon an object in a side street that looked decidedly out of place. It was an automobile that was so set in the shadows of a dark corner and in such an unexpected locality, as to arouse his curiosity. He found that it was a large, roomy touring car and had apparently been abandoned there for the night. In that case, there was no bed in the city more suitable to his weary limbs than the soft, wide cushions of the rear seat. The very thought of that luxurious couch made his fatigued nerves feel calm and sleepy. In a few minutes he was curled up fast asleep between the black cushions and the even blacker night.

How long he thus enjoyed the oblivion he did not know, but suddenly he became aware of a furious energy of sound and motion in the machine. It gave a lurch as he began to

gather together the fragments of understanding, reassuring him that he was not being rocked in the cradle of the deep or that his ship had not struck an iceberg in midocean. Then it surged away. Pickup reconstructed his mind and body into an attitude suitable to one taking an after-dark joy ride in a stolen car, and tried to understand his entertainers. The first lamp post they flashed by sent the creeps racing up and down his spine. The woman was Ogallalla Sue and the man was Val Hone.

Pickup saw, when the car stopped, that they were about a block away from the ferry. The half-breed got out. Val Hone drove on slowly across the broad open way and Pickup took the chance of getting out before they came to the bright lights where he would be discovered. He was most interested in following the woman, for she was the one who would be in charge of Nugget, if he was a prisoner. Therefore, he ran across the street into the shadows and watched the woman come on around. She got a ferry ticket, and went on into the crowd which was waiting for the gates to open on to the boat. He followed her and soon discovered that Val Hone was there going the same way.

Without difficulty he followed them across to the other side of the bay and onto the trolley line, going he knew not where. He did not consider himself lost, as long as he could keep

Ogallalla Sue in view. She was going somewhere and he meant to keep her company at a safe distance. At the end of the line, Val Hone went into a little hotel, somewhat conspicuous in the little group of houses, and the half-breed went on along the narrow road that led around the bluffs. The night had become clearer, and he could see her form at considerable distance, but he noticed that she stopped frequently as if listening and he understood that she was becoming suspicious of being followed. He could hardly believe that they had been able to get Nugget to any place where she could be going at that distance, but it was necessary for him to find out. Whether he became inattentive from being absorbed in these thoughts, or Indian instinct led the woman to play a trick on her trail, is not known, but Pickup presently realized that he was following nobody. The discovery was disquieting. He began to lose his nerve. Every rock looked as if it concealed an ambushed enemy and every shadow took on the appearance of a human form creeping upon him like some jungle beast. To wander about was not only to be uncomfortably filled with those hidden terrors, but it got him nowhere, and he decided to find a place where he could finish his sleep, though in a more humble way than when he so comfortably and peacefully

engaged the berth, an hour or two before, in the rear of the touring car. Such a place was found upon a bed of leaves drifted into the narrow space between two parts of a shelving rock that had sunk in the center and had been drawn two or three feet apart. He now felt as free from care as a soldier in a bomb-proof trench and was soon asleep.

Pickup awoke in the bright daylight. He was at the foot of a huge broken bluff. In the distance he saw a farmhouse and it suggested the chance of forestalling the dreaded hunger-pains that so often get away with a boy's courage. The suggestion at once became a part of his speedily developed plan that he would visit the farmhouse, secure a supply of refreshments and then spend the rest of the day searching for the place visited by the Indian woman.

His plan was well carried out, but it was afternoon before he came around on the far side of Pine Cone Hill, where he saw the first sign of something looking like a place suitable to Ogallalla Sue. This discovery was made when he came out on a ledge to look down into a narrow basin in the side of the ridge. At an angle in the wall up under the shelving stone was to be seen the front of a house, built out of rock, and consisting of two rooms, one upon the other, reaching to the ledge which

served as a roof. On the opposite side was a wide passageway from the top of the hill worn down by the flow of water in rainy weather. Before the front of the house, which blended so with the overhanging bluffs as to be almost invisible a hundred steps away, with a wide, rocky, open way into the forest below. He thought it was an ideal place for his partner to be entombed and starved until he would

reveal the secret of the rich gold pocket he had found. Such was the scheme, he believed to be beyond doubt, which caused them to make this effort to lead Nugget into a trap.

Pickup lay flat upon the lowest layer of

shelving rock where he could watch the door and the several small openings answering as windows, for any signs of inhabitants or prisoners. The only living thing to be seen or heard was some nesting pigeons that had their home back under the ledge making the roof of the house. He had about made up his mind to go down and investigate the silent place when he caught sight of a red object coming around to the passageway from a point farther up the hill. He watched it come on till he recognized the figure of Ogallalla Sue. Now he was sure that he was about to do a priceless service to his friend, certainly held there as prisoner. He watched her eagerly while endeavoring to decide on what to do.

He saw that she was coming with a loaf of bread and some cheese in one hand, and a jug of water in the other. It was the very food one would expect to see given to a prisoner. She came up close beside the wall and placed the food in a window from the side as if she were endeavoring not to be seen. After speaking a few words to the prisoner, she went back the way she came. Pickup slipped cautiously around the rocks to a point where he could watch her.

Half way up the huge hill, and perhaps nearly a fourth of the way around, he saw her go into a small stone hut in an open space

used as a garden. Then she came back and seated herself at a point where she could see the front of the house below under the ledge. He waited but she sat there as if it were to be an all day watch. Pickup studied the situation. If he had a rope he could get down under the ledge where it became the roof of the house and perhaps crawl in through the narrow space into the upper room and from that to the prison place below. As this idea flashed in on him a grapevine caught his attention and his problem was soon solved.

The woman could not see him from where she sat and it was but a few minutes before he had the grapevine fastened securely where he could safely use it. He crawled over on to the upper edge of the wall to a point where he found that he could get through into the upper part of the peculiar house. This was quickly accomplished. There he discovered a storeroom stacked with boxes filled with goods suitable to stock a small variety store. In one corner he found a trap door which he opened after much labor, but from the structure of the casing, he could see only a very small portion of the room.

"Who is that up there?" he heard some one cautiously ask. The voice was not that of Nugget.

"Who is that down there?" he evasively replied.

"I am a prisoner," was the answer in a voice that at once dispelled any notion of it being a man. "A guide brought me here when we became lost together from our company and he told me to wait for him here while he climbed up above to see where we were. As soon as he was gone a woman closed the door and locked it. She brought me some food and told me that friends would call for me about the middle of the afternoon."

The speaker still kept back from under the trap door, where she could not be seen.

"Then we have no time to lose," Pickup responded. "The old Indian woman is out there on the rocks now watching for someone and it is already past the middle of the afternoon. You can't get out anywhere down there. I think I can get you out up here."

"You said Indian woman," the prisoner questioned. "Do you know what Indian woman?"

"Ogallalla Sue."

"Then it is Val Hone who is expected to come here, I am sure," replied the girl, coming to the ladder steps. "He is my father's worst enemy. This is his trap I am in."

She came up to a step where Pickup could help her up through the hole in the floor.

"It's Fanny," he cried.

"Johnny," she corrected.

"No, it's Paquita," he replied. "I've got your pedigree now. I have been chumming with your father for three weeks. I was hunting him when I came here. Night before last the Indian woman led him off on a note that said he must follow her to find you. I don't believe they got him."

Pickup began to pile boxes up so as to make a way for Paquita to climb to the top of the wall. But she could climb as well as he could and was soon out through the space under the roof and going hand over hand up the grapevine to the top of the ledge over the house. Pickup quickly followed. They slipped cautiously around the rocks, to be safe from the eyes of the Indian woman, and carefully searched their way around toward the base of the bluff into the valley. But their skill was very poorly matched with the inherited instinct sharpening the senses of the child of the forest. She caught a glimpse of something that stirred her doubts. She ran down to the house and looked in at the window. Then she unlocked the door and went in. She soon ran out, and in looking around discovered the telltale grapevine. With this discovery, she knew her glimpse had been that of the runaway prisoner. Her prey was not to

escape her so easily as that. Long experienced in swiftly tracking friends and foes, she cut through the shortest way and soon came in sight of the escaping girl. At the same time she saw that the runaway was being led by a boy who was perhaps a score of steps ahead of the girl. With wary skill in nimbly getting through the rough places, she passed down around the fugitive, and as the girl came by an opening between two rocks, an arm suddenly encircled her and a hand went over her mouth before she could utter a sound. Then she turned the girl around and forced her out of the path and down into the thick underbrush.

Pickup, quite keenly on the alert, soon discovered that his charge had disappeared as if she had dropped into one of the gulches cutting in along the sides of the rocky ridges, or had fallen over one of the many shelving ledges. He retraced his steps with the eye of a cat searching for a single move of unnatural color in the rugged scenes around. He did not believe she could be far away and he made a circle that would inclose her. He knew that Paquita was either struck down unconscious or a hand was over her mouth. It was the Indian woman, he was sure, for a man would have got him first. He narrowed his circle and presently caught a glimpse of

red and white through a thick clump of bushes covering a depression under an overhanging rock. Time was precious because Val Hone might not be far away and he could not hope to save the girl against him. Nevertheless, he again made the round, this time narrowing his circle so that he came within a few feet of the captive, yet passing by as if he had not seen them. This gave him a chance to measure the situation and prepare to test his strength with that of the Indian woman.

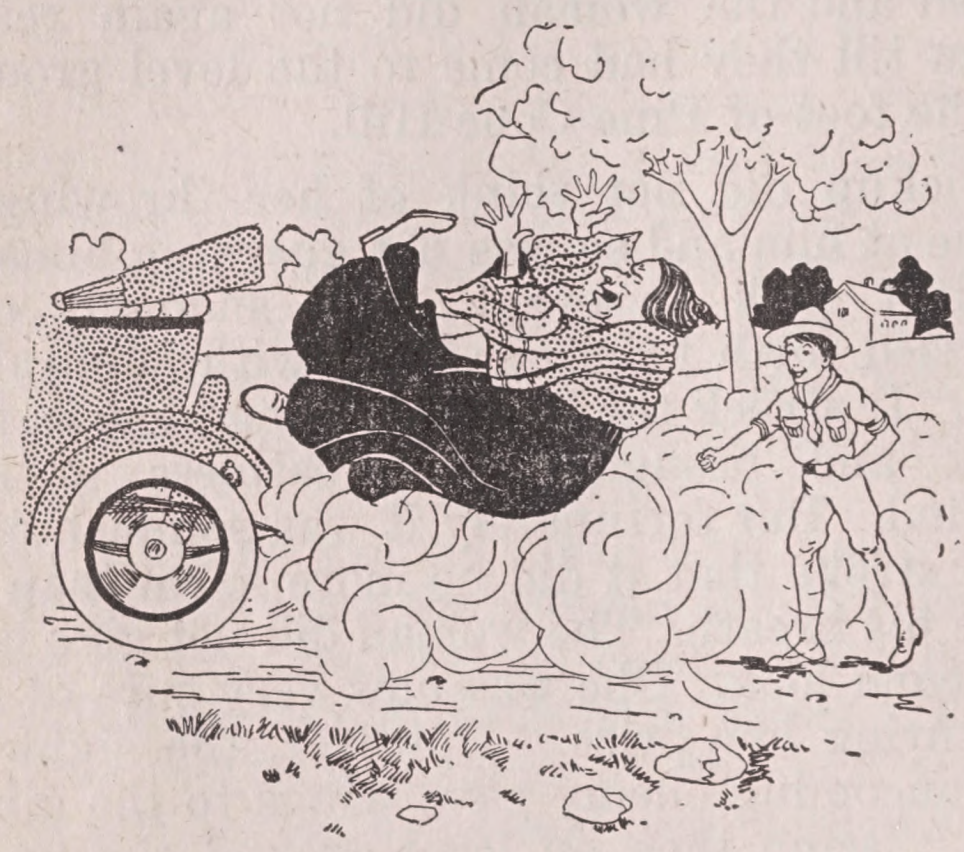
He crawled around over the rock, and when he saw that the woman did not know where he was, he dropped down at her back, clutching her throat with both hands. Then he flung her back, caught up the half suffocated girl in his arms and ran with all his strength down the mountain side, wherever he could find a way to take his burden through. The woman was momentarily stunned, but with natural quickness she recovered and started again in pursuit.

Pickup was out of breath by the time Paquita had recovered hers. As he set her down upon her feet, they saw the woman coming. Pickup seized a stone in one hand and a club in the other to cover the girl's flight as best he could. The woman was rapidly gaining on them and he saw that she had

also armed herself with a club. The girl, now wildly frightened, was making commendable speed and the woman did not again reach them till they had come to the level ground at the foot of Pine Cone Hill.

Pickup did not think of her throwing a stone at him and so was not guarding himself against such an event. But suddenly one whizzed forth from her hand with admirable aim. It struck the boy a glancing blow in the back and brought him breathless to the ground. But fortunately it was so much of a side stroke that it did no more harm than to take his breath. The woman did not give him a second look. She was now very sure of recapturing her prize. However, the sight of the oncoming enemy gave wings to the girl's feet. Being then on level ground she knew how to use her running power to better advantage. But her breath was not seasoned like that of the Indian. She began to feel suffocated. Just as her loss of breath was about to break her down, a black object loomed before her. It was an automobile. With a cry of joy she gave the crank a furious turn, sprang into the car and pulled the lever. She felt the machine respond to her touch. But this act was almost too late. The woman was climbing over the rear to get at her. Suddenly the car gave a lurch and shot

forward It went out from under the Indian woman. She fell back in a heap upon the



ground and then ran wildly after the machine. Her persistence was commendable but it was futile.

Pickup recovered his wind and arose in time to see the exciting episode. He ran on after the woman and, coming up behind her, gave her a shove that sent her sprawling into a clump of bushes. He passed on by. In a moment the car swerved around in a circle, and as the driver saw that there was no pursuer but Pickup, she stopped the machine. He climbed in and took the wheel.

XVI.

HUMORIST OR HERO.

Rig Veda left Merrilee in the House of Mystery while he went to secure a representative of the law and an automobile ready for the relief expedition in search of Paquita. In half an hour he returned with a robust assistant disguised as a chauffeur and they were soon away on their adventurous task. In due time they ran the machine on to the ferry boat and were landed where they could get specific directions how to get to Pine Cone Hill.

Rig Veda was hilarious, not only because he was verifying his detective abilities as being superior to all the police and professional bureaus combined, but he was manifesting them before the approving eyes of a very adorable lady.

"Who says that I don't do things?" he exclaimed, as they bowled along over the rather uneven way toward Pine Cone Hill. "The criminal operates outside the social system, and if the detective comes at him through something outside his intellectual system, all his thought-out defenses go to pieces and he does not know how to hide his criminal se-

crets. I can rescue the defeated and restore the lost because I am a detective-philosopher. That is why I am inspired and elated with the music of social movement, the song of personal conduct, and the bounding poetry of human schemes."

Rig Veda's abounding enthusiasm began to subside somewhat as they progressed along the monotonous course of the rough way into the foothills to the bluffs, over which arose the loaf-like top of Pine Cone Hill. At last the machine was driven as far up into the bluff as it could be taken and then it was turned about for ready use in case of emergency. Rig Veda gave directions to the disguised chauffeur, and then went with Merrilee up through the rocky way to the foot of Pine Cone Hill above them. When they were near the top, they looked down around the edge where they could see a log hut in a small open space that was like a garden spot among the broken ledges. It was a tortuous way through which to pick safe steps among the huge rocks on around to the plot of level ground containing the hut, but presently they came out among the overhanging rocks and hurried across to the open door.

A glance showed that the house had been recently occupied and unexpectedly, if not hastily, deserted. An Indian shawl lay across

a bench. A loaf of bread and some cheese that had been cut not more than half an hour before were fresh upon a table under a row of small single pane holes cut to serve as windows. Rig Veda searched the place with the eye of a trained specialist. He found a girl's handkerchief lying in a crack in the wall and then a note at the end of a bench near the door. The note was significant. It illuminated the whole story. He read it aloud:

"A mind-reader is coming to read the girl's soul as it reflects the father's mind, and find where the gold mine is. Write down the description of the place for me. If you are sure I can find it from the description, let them all go away together. If not, by all means keep the girl. If you see any trick on us be sure to trap the clairvoyant, if you can, till I come. Watch out so she can't escape or be taken away from you."

Rig Veda was no longer perplexed.

"She has either escaped or she has been rescued," he asserted confidently. "Wait here till I scout around a little. The policeman was to stay on top of the hill ready for anything. He may have seen something. I'll be gone only a few minutes and not lose sight of the place."

Merrilee was very tired from much climbing and she seated herself upon the table

where she could look out through the little square window. She had been there only a few minutes when a shadow or a rustle under the window somewhat alarmed her. She jumped from the table to the floor, intending to go outside. But before she reached the door it was slammed shut and she heard the padlock snap that was used to secure the door from the outside. Before comprehending fully what had happened, but in the midst of rapidly rising fear, she heard someone chuckling as in a sudden access of great satisfaction.

"Ho! Ho!" she heard at one of the open chinks in the wall where someone was staring at her. "It is a beautiful bird I have captured in my cage. She will sing me sweet songs by and by."

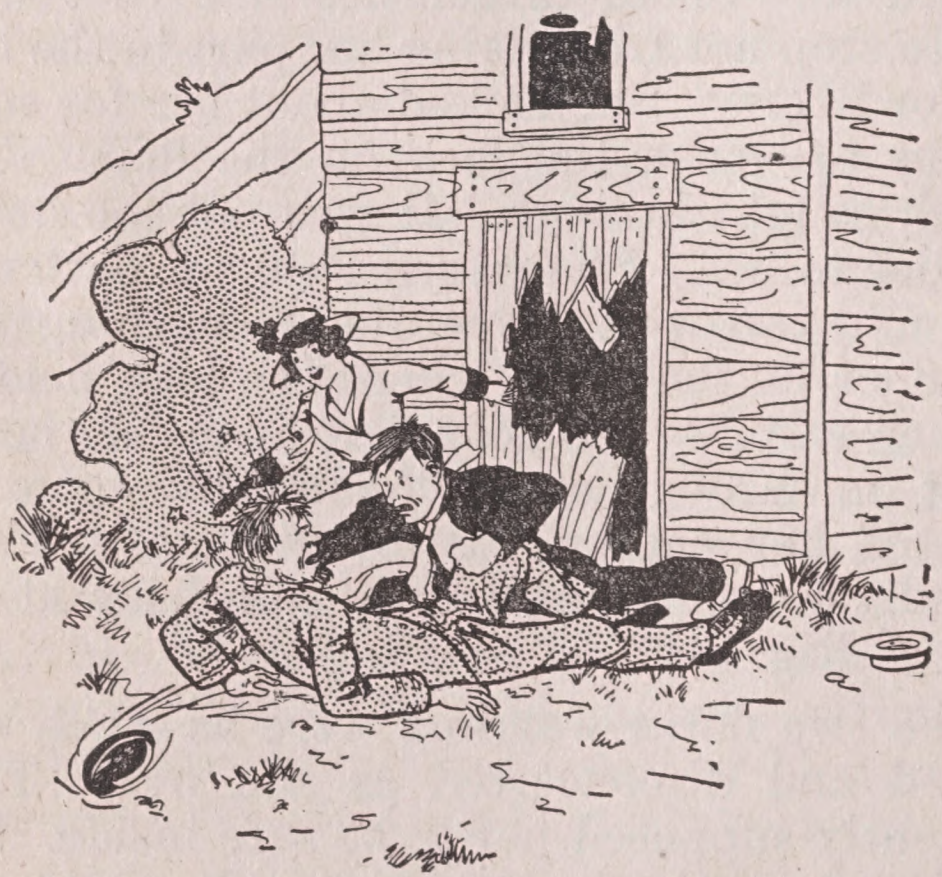
Merrilee was panic-stricken. This was the first time danger had ever come to her. But she had hardly time to reach any crisis of fear when she heard the challenging voice of Rig Veda. He demanded that the door be opened. For answer there was only an exclamation of anger and the succeeding sound of blows and a struggle. She found a thin slit between the logs where she could look out and see Rig Veda in desperate combat with a burly fellow who charged like a wild bull upon his more nimble antagonist. It flashed through

her mind that such a frail frame as that of her defender must lose before the enduring onslaught of such a muscular enemy, unless he had help. She could scream, but before the policeman on the hill would be able to locate her voice and get down through that rugged pathway of rocks it would be too late. Surely Rig Veda would have called for help if that were of any use. The next idea was to throw her own strength into the scale. But she was locked in. Small difficulties like that were not to stop her from doing her part in the battle for liberty. She looked about her for some means to smash the lock on the door. The bench caught her eye. It was not too heavy for her to use. She raised it like a battering ram and ran with desperate strength against the door at the point where the lock held it. To her surprise the door flew open, the bench went on through and fell mightily upon the foot of her captor. Involuntarily, she followed the bench and landed in a heap at the feet of Rig Veda.

The two fierce warriors were as much surprised and disconcerted as she was. They evidently supposed her to be safe inside. Her fighting qualities had not been taken into consideration. The enemy rubbed his foot and howled out some sidesplitting protest. Rig Veda, forgetting the deadly struggle, gallant-

ly lifted the prostrate woman to her feet. Then the antagonists seemed to remember their job and they went at it again. The battle was as fierce as they knew how to put up, though neither one seemed to receive any very serious wounds.

Merrilee regathered her war spirit that had fled at her entrance into the arena of gladiators. She must fulfill her intention to help. The death grapple was on. The war-



riors were now upon the earth rolling over each other and flinging each other about with little regard to the scientific rules of the game. Of course the larger man would win

in such a test of physical endurance if she did not help. She seized a short stick that happened to be convenient and watched her chance. She made several passes and barely missed giving a knockout blow on the head of the hero instead of on that of the villain.

But at last she landed a swift one square on the head of the enemy. The fellow let loose the advantage he had of his opponent and sprang to his feet, angrily facing the belligerent amazon.

"What t'ell did ye do that fer?" he yelled, rubbing his head. "That hurt."

Rig Veda was up and at him.

"No, you don't," exclaimed the unwilling villain. "Two on one's nigger's fun, as we used to say. The contract didn't say anything about fighting a woman. I throw up the job."

"I've got him licked," explained Rig Veda, as if an explanation would clear up the situation. "Let's go hunt up the policeman and get back to town. There's nothing more doing out here."

"Not by a darn sight, I ain't licked," responded the late fighting man, rubbing his scalp in rising wrath, as the bump there grew larger. "I've a good notion to arrest you for conspiracy to get the hero worship of an innocent woman. I think a case like that

gets something like ten years in the pen. Anyhow, I'm going to explain."

"You see, lady," he said, turning to the mystified young woman, "I'm the policeman disguised as a chauffeur. When this hero-poet found that the captive girl was gone and the hero work had all oozed out he came back and hired me to play villain, so he could knock me out and rescue you and be a hero to you anyhow. I wouldn't have that bump on my head just alone for his ten dollars and I wouldn't have any more for a hundred dollars apiece. That's why I throw up the job."

"You see," explained Rig Veda, in order to put a better look on the bad appearances, "the whole thing was very cleverly planned, but I hadn't foreseen about you breaking through and putting knots on his head. You remember I told you that I was bound to be a hero even if I had to frame up a case. I admit that concussions of the scalp were not bargained for in this joke, and he has the right to complain. It merely emphasizes the fact that there is such a thing as incalculable chance operating in the affairs of men, especially when the eternal triangle is concerned. You can see that I am also a humorist, and I am not so sure but what it is more important to be a humorist than a hero. All questions of preference are mere attitudes of mind any-

way. I am glad to find that I have an unexpected attitude of mind. I am a humorist. I acknowledge that the joke is on me. Now that we have all enjoyed ourselves over a bit of humorous acting, and it is nearing dark, let us find our way to the automobile. The frame-up has gone busted. I'll have to try some other scheme to be a hero to my lady friend."

Bewildered in such a transition from tragedy to humor, as if it had been regularly staged for her entertainment, Merrilee allowed Rig Veda to help her back over the rocks to the foot of Pine Cone Bluff. That the way was walked through in silence was attributable to the difficult task of getting over the rocks, not to the undignified end of their heroic rescue-journey.

The chauffeur was leading the way in similar silence. Suddenly he raised a note of alarm.

"Where's that automobile?" he exclaimed. "Here is the spot where we left it."

"Look!" he cried again, as he studied the tracks. "Look how it jiggled. There wasn't a firm hand on the steering wheel."

A few steps farther on he picked up a thick red neckerchief.

"This looks like Indian stuff," he commented.

But whatever had happened the automobile was gone, and it was nearly night. The situation was serious.

With a heavy grouch for the outcome of his day's work, the chauffeur stalked away on the track of the vanished automobile, and the two castaways took up seriously the problem confronting them. As it was almost out of the question for them to tramp three or four

miles through the woods to the nearest station, the glimpse of a farm house on an elevation they could see over the scattering trees was a welcome suggestion. The forlorn victims of the recent fiasco of adventure went to ask for the hospitality of the nearest shelter.

The farmer welcomed them to his table. There was room only for the young woman in the house that night, but if the gentleman desired he could sleep in the hayloft. Rig Veda welcomed that accommodation as a luxury under the circumstances.

Considerable light was thrown on the day's work when the farmer's wife told them it was not often she could count three strangers at her house in one day. That morning she had given breakfast to a boy who said his name was Pickup.

This was good news to the defeated rescuers. They now believed that Paquita had been found and taken away by Pickup.

XVII.

THE FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR.

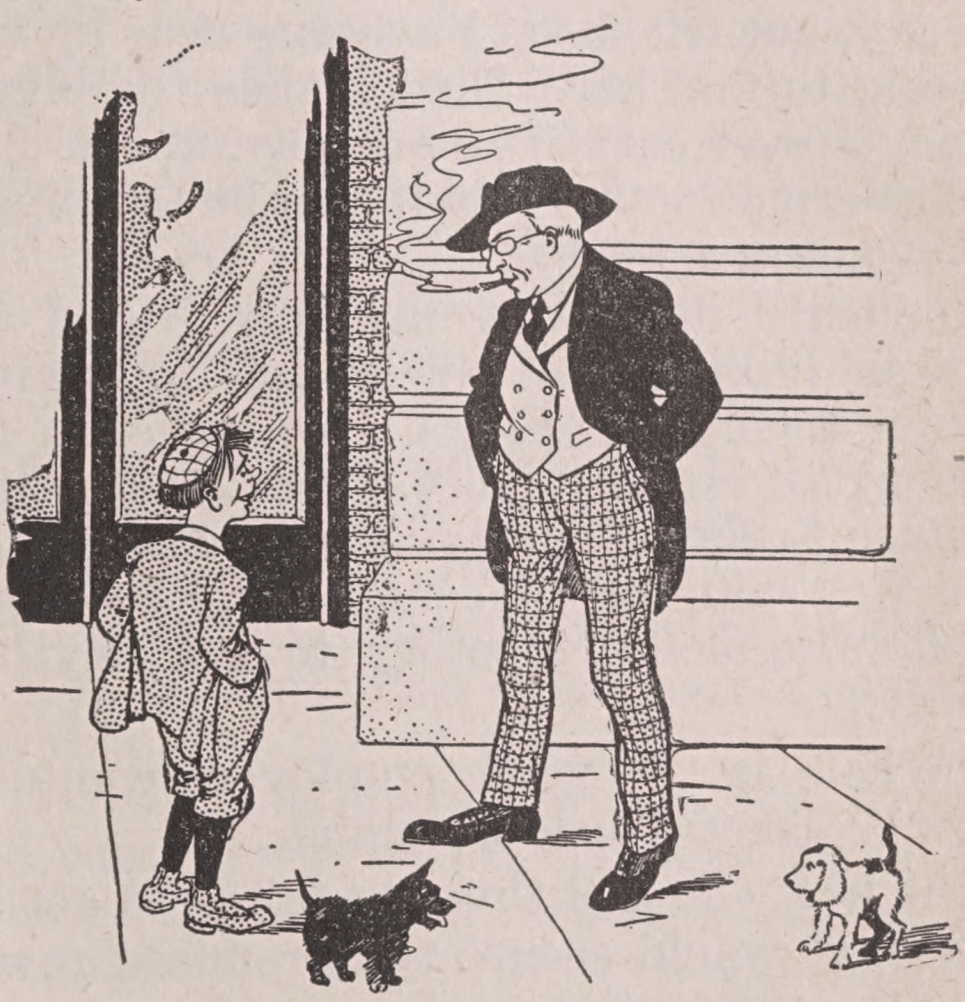
Uncle Jeremiah had the looks of being approachable. A uniform upon him as the guardian of public peace would probably not have added any to his appearance as a trustworthy source of appeal for both sympathy and help. He did not have the worried look of one waiting for a train out of a war zone. In consequence, he was frequently called upon to function as an information bureau. He supposed that some small favor of this kind was sought from him when a somewhat undersized youth, typical of those in the city who live by their wits on small gains, touched him on the arm in the corridor of the hotel and asked to see him aside for a moment.

"You live in this hotel, don't you?" he asked in a very confidential if not patronizing attitude.

Uncle Jeremiah responded with a feeling of enough suspicion to make sure that his pocketbook was still resting safely in his inside pocket.

"I am a special detective," he began with an exceedingly knowing air. "I have a very peculiar case in this hotel. My client wants

to get onto the samples in room 614. I've been up around the room and put in a few feelers to the clerks, but if I get my money for the job I've got to load up on facts some other way."



Uncle Jeremiah felt a sudden desire to be foxy.

"Is it important?" he asked. "What's in it for us?"

"Important? I should guess!" exclaimed the boy. "There's ten in it for me. I have already earned ten today by playing guide

for a bunch of college girls in the woods. My boss was a good friend to one of them. He got me to lose her for a joke. I left her waiting for me at a house in the bluffs while I hunted for her friends. He had to be here in the city, but friends of his living near by were waiting to find her. That makes the biggest money I ever earned in one day, and if I get this information for him it will be the biggest I ever got in a week."

Suddenly the young man discovered that he was talking too much, and he twisted around trying to tell the rest with his face without saying any more. The explanations sounded to the old man as if they meant more than was said, but he could not piece enough of the fragments together to get anything definite.

"What is it your employer wants to know?" asked Uncle Jeremiah.

The boy who had thus far failed to get any facts that would secure the promised reward became confidential again.

"He wants to know who is in room 614 and if there is a rich woman there, or if it is some detective layout to trap him."

As that was the number of the suite occupied by Merrilee and Molly, Uncle Jeremiah came to the conclusion that an officer could

get a better understanding of the case than he could.

"You stay here," he said to the information seeker, "and I'll get all you want to know from the manager."

Uncle Jeremiah saw the manager at one of the desks in the office and went up to him.

"Call your house detective," he said to the manager, "and have him take the young man I am talking to down to the police station, where he can be questioned about two very suspicious transactions he has been engaged in today."

Uncle Jeremiah went back to the young man. "I have found out all about it," he began, as he saw the officer coming around behind them. "My family lives in that room and I'm going to find what your boss wants with them."

The boy was paralyzed as the officer's hand came down on his shoulder at the last words of the old man. Uncle Jeremiah suggested that the young fellow should telephone or send a note to his boss to come and clear up the arrest, but the young detective said his boss would know it anyway as he was waiting somewhere outside. He did not know his employer's name. All he knew was that he had heard an Indian woman call him Val.

There was no excitement and few even

among those in the corridor knew that an arrest had been made. However, there was one guest who was restlessly on the alert. She had seen the young man talking to Uncle Jeremiah and had got close enough to hear that someone wanted to know about room 614. She suspected that it was another attempt to answer her note. She also heard that an Indian woman had called him Val. What a beautiful name! So short and sweet! How lovely to be called Molly Val. How nobly though blindly the splendid man was searching for her in burning unrest. She must help on the call of Providence in his soul. She must help hasten the happy moves of Fate.

When the police patrol wagon received the would-be detective into its well concealed interior and drove away to the station, Molly was hastening along in the rear, desperately endeavoring to keep it in sight. She wanted to be sure that if Mr. Val was anywhere along the way he would see her and then all explanations could be made concerning room 614, and the note she had sent him.

When she arrived at the station she was told by an obliging policeman that the young man had been locked up for a hearing the next day and his accusers were gone.

Next to the police station was the fire de-

partment and the array of uniforms was almost as alluring as if they were broadbrims with corresponding chances of pleated shirts and low wool socks. Across the road was a small park lined with benches for the weary, and being both weary and curious, she took a seat opposite the two wide open doorways of uniformed men. She watched them bring in some prisoners and pass them back to the jail through the alley. There was an exercise drill of one of the fire engines, which added to her moving-picture entertainment. A struggling woman taken back through the alley interested her so much that she crossed the street and stood on the sidewalk facing the pathetic scene.

As the crowd dispersed and she turned to go back to her point of observation an automobile came spinning up along the sidewalk directly before her. It contained a boy and a girl. They had stopped to inquire of a policeman the way to the Green Tree Hotel. Molly recognized them both at once and they joyfully recognized her.

"Uncle Jeremiah is dead anxious to see you and this little girl," she said enthusiastically. "He wants all of us to be on the lookout for you and here I've found you. My! how lucky. Merrilee is now gone away with Rig Veda hunting for this very girl. My!

how lucky I found you. Uncle Jeremiah and Merrilee will be dreadful glad. Oh, me! How lucky."

Molly was in such an ecstasy of victory that she forgot all about Mr. Val and the benevolence of Fate. Pickup was especially well pleased. He could confidently and safely leave Paquita with this friend.

"I've got to get this automobile back to Pine Cone Hill before it is too dark for me to see the way," he explained. "I don't want to go to the penitentiary on the charge of being an automobile thief."

"But you didn't steal it," expostulated Paquita. "I stole it and picked you up to save you from a woman. Watch out that she don't get you when you go back."

He felt no alarm. Waving adieu with the satisfied look of one saying "Leave that to me," he climbed back into the machine and disappeared around the corner to make his way back to Pine Cone Hill.

Molly and Paquita were immediately confidential as reunited friends. The little girl had passed through such experiences that the smiling face of a friendly woman looked beautiful and faithful as paradise.

"I meant to go last night to the campfire girls," Paquita explained, "but one of my University friends persuaded me to stay with

her last night and they would take me to the campfire this morning. Then I got into trouble. The guide who was to take us there let the others get lost from us."

But Paquita noticed that Molly was not hearing anything she said.

"Wait here for me two or three minutes," Molly exclaimed, quite breathless with the intensity of her interest in some one who had just gone, among a number of others, into the alleyway to the rear of the station. "I want to speak to a friend who has just gone in to find out about a poor fellow who has been arrested, all on my account. I'll be right back."

Paquita, now feeling secure, and being confident that she was safe among friends, kept her seat and became interested in the crowds.

Molly went down the alley between the station and the fire department, where she discovered her man. He was getting information about the arrest of his amateurish detective. As he wore a chauffeur's cap and goggles she was not sure of him at first. When the man whom he had hired to go and make inquiries for him concerning his blundering detective had gone inside, Molly came up to the object of her interest and secured his attention.

"Mr. Val," she began, "I am the one who wrote you the note and I have been wanting

to see you so I could explain and soliloquize about the trouble I caused you at the Fair grounds. As it is getting dark, if you will walk with me back to the benches where our little girl is I'll explain and then hurry back with her to the hotel. She has been lost and Uncle Jeremiah has been anxious about her."

Molly had been drawing the wondering man back with her toward the street. He was, however, at the same time closely watching for other surprises, and among them he was nourishing a vacillating suspicion that this ardent woman was a trap set by his enemy.

As he came to the opening at the end of the alley he caught sight of Paquita on the end of the bench. It was the first he knew of her escape. Or did it show the success promised him by the clairvoyant? He could not have any idea which to believe.

An important thought struck him.

"I'm very busy now," he explained, "but I want to talk with you. That is my automobile exactly in front of the girl. Both of you get in there and as soon as I am through here in a few minutes with my business, I'll take you both to the hotel."

"At last! At last!" she exclaimed fervently to herself, as she swiftly obeyed and was soon

seated with Paquita in the carriage waiting for the beloved Mr. Val.

Hardly were they through congratulating themselves on being soon taken to the hotel when Mr. Val came running out of the alleyway with his cap pulled down tight over his head, his eyes goggled, and at considerably more speed than dignity. He sprang to the wheel in the machine and put on the power as rapidly as it could be done. Two policemen came into view after him with similar speed, just as the machine lurched forward from the curb. He gathered all the speed allowed him by the hills he had to climb and the law he had to avoid.

Molly tried to talk to him by leaning forward over the back of his seat.

"Oh, Mr. Val," she exclaimed, "how true and beautiful it is that destiny can never escape Fate and that the clairvoyants can tell us the ways of friendly providence. We now know that the angels have introduced us and our future is made in heaven."

But Val Hone seemed to be more intent upon getting to a decided-upon destination than to engage his mind on any supposed case of the gods.

At last he condescended.

"You don't mind," said he, with tears in his voice, "if I go out of the way to call on

my sick sister. It will only take us a few minutes, and I should have been there this morning."

Of course they did not mind. Molly became very sympathetic. How very considerate and lovable he was! What sweet sympathy for a suffering sister. Admiration beat higher with every heart throb!

But the sister evidently lived in a very dark and dreary part of the town. She lived in a house where no lights were to be seen. Nevertheless, Molly soulfully trusted Mr. Val and Paquita supposed all was well with Molly. Mr. Val asked them to run up with him a few minutes and meet his sister. They of course could not refuse to go to the bedside of their accommodating friend's sick sister. It was up a long, dark stairway, and then up another; but Mr. Val kept matches lighted till they got to the top, where he unlocked the door and bid them go inside. He came in and closed the door. Unobserved by them he turned the key in the lock, and then transferred it to his pocket. With another match he lighted the lamp on a small table and then he turned on them.

Paquita recognized him as he drew off his goggles. She did not allow the slightest sign of surprise to be seen by him. She knew

somehow that Molly's confidence had been used to entrap them.

He sat back on the table by the lamp and Molly sat down on the side of the bed, struggling with some vague alarm.

"Who put you on my trail?" asked the man of destiny, so sharply that for the first time his voice did not sound good to her. "And what do you think you are doing to me? Put it straight. I've got to know."

"Where is your sister?" asked Molly, evasively, as if she were grasping for a chance to get back to the line of faith she had while coming up the stairs.

"My sister!" he laughed, as if he had forgotten it. "I must say you are dead easy for a detective. Evidently she is dead and buried."

"We must be going," said Molly, rising quickly and running to the door.

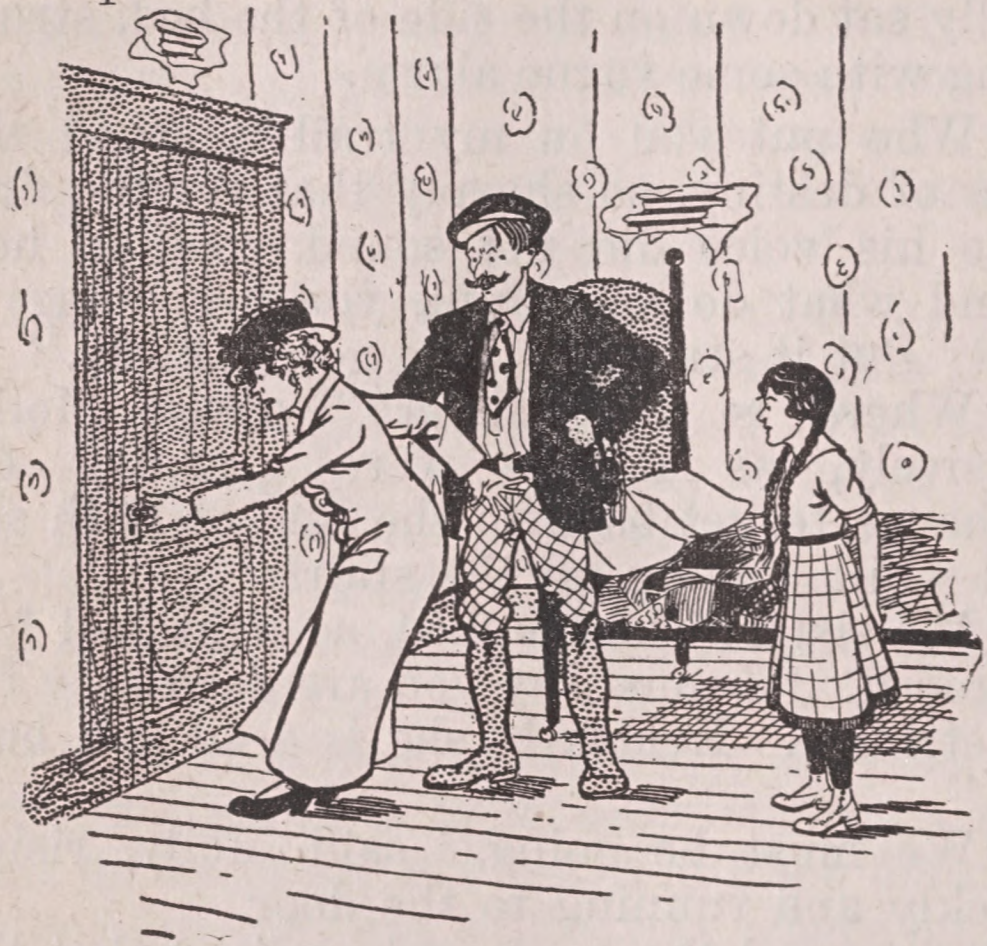
She turned the knob and realized that the door was locked. She commenced jerking the door with all her might, but Mr. Val interfered and pushed her back upon the bed.

"I'll send Ogallalla Sue here to take care of you two till I'm ready to let you out, and if either one of you makes any attempt to escape we'll send your body to a place where it can be dissected for the good of humanity."

He opened the door and went out. They

heard him lock it and then go down the stairs.

Paquita got a heavy chair and shoved the back up under the lock.



"There, now," she exclaimed, quite satisfied, "there won't be anybody come in through that door till we get ready to let them. Let's go to bed and have a good night's rest. I'm sleepy."

XVIII.

THE INDIAN WOMAN'S TRAP.

Pickup found that it was getting quite dark when he approached the place where he had made his escape with Paquita in the automobile. As he had a vague intuition of trouble in that vicinity, perhaps then lying in wait somewhere among the silent bushes and sullen rocks, he drove warily up to a position where the machine might be easily seen by its owner. Disgusted with himself for having such a feeling of fear when there was nothing in sight to suggest any danger, he arose to leap out over the side of the car. As he did so there was a rustle in the bushes behind him. The uncertain sound unnerved him and bewildered his action. As he struck the ground a noose settled over his shoulders, well thrown by a practiced hand. He was jerked backward and Ogallalla Sue fastened the cord so that his hands were helpless. Then she motioned him to get up and gave a jerk on the rope indicating that he was to follow her. She led him on up to the place from which he had rescued Paquita, shoved him inside, took off the rope and locked him in.

The next morning she brought him food

and water which she pushed in through one of the little square windows. His wits seemed to work better after this refreshment and he busied himself with the problem of

escape. The friendly grapevine which he had used to get Paquita out from under the wide shelf roof was still dangling from the tree to which he had fastened it, but it swung over the shelving ledge far out of reach. He crawled out under the roof, but it was more

than thirty feet to the ground, which was well covered with jagged rocks. A long, slender strip of hickory that had been nailed around a box offered a suggestion. He would tie his handkerchief on the end of it and wave it out from under the ledge as a signal of dis-

tress, such as is used by castaways on desert islands. Some one might see it. In another minute it was waving to the breeze.

And some one did see it. Down at the foot of the rocky way among the big trees a man of slender build, somewhat pale from recent illness, and weak from over-exertion, was

making an examination of the rocky bluffs around Pine Cone Hill. Somewhere in the forest leading that way, he had lost the trail of an enemy who had crossed his path the evening before. He had seen his enemy going, with suspicious efforts to conceal himself, on board a late ferryboat, and had followed him to the foot of the bluffs and there lost him. He feared that the man held prisoner the most precious possession he had in the world, his little daughter Paquita. The unnatural flutter of white caught his alert attention. Two or three white birds, probably pigeons, were seen flying about, but this was not one of them. He watched it until he became sure that it was a call for help. With the training of a man born to the skill of the mountains and plains, he made his way closer to the object of his suspicions, until he came up alongside the rocks within a few feet of the door. The white handkerchief was being waved from an unseen hand, up under the roof, almost over his head. He picked up a bit of stone and threw it with practiced precision so that it struck the ledge, where the wall was built up to it, and bounded inside. Pickup was astonished as he took up this wordless messenger and studied it. Certainly no enemy could have attracted his attention that way. He had no paper on which to

write a reply, but he had the stub of a pencil. In large letters on the stone he wrote the one word "Help," and tossed it out as it had come.

Nugget picked up the stone which fell near him and saw the word. He studied the situation. He could see no way to help but to break down the door. That would be a slow and difficult task. He scouted around about the place for half an hour. There were no signs of anyone near unless it was at the little hut in an open spot up in the side of Pine Cone Hill.

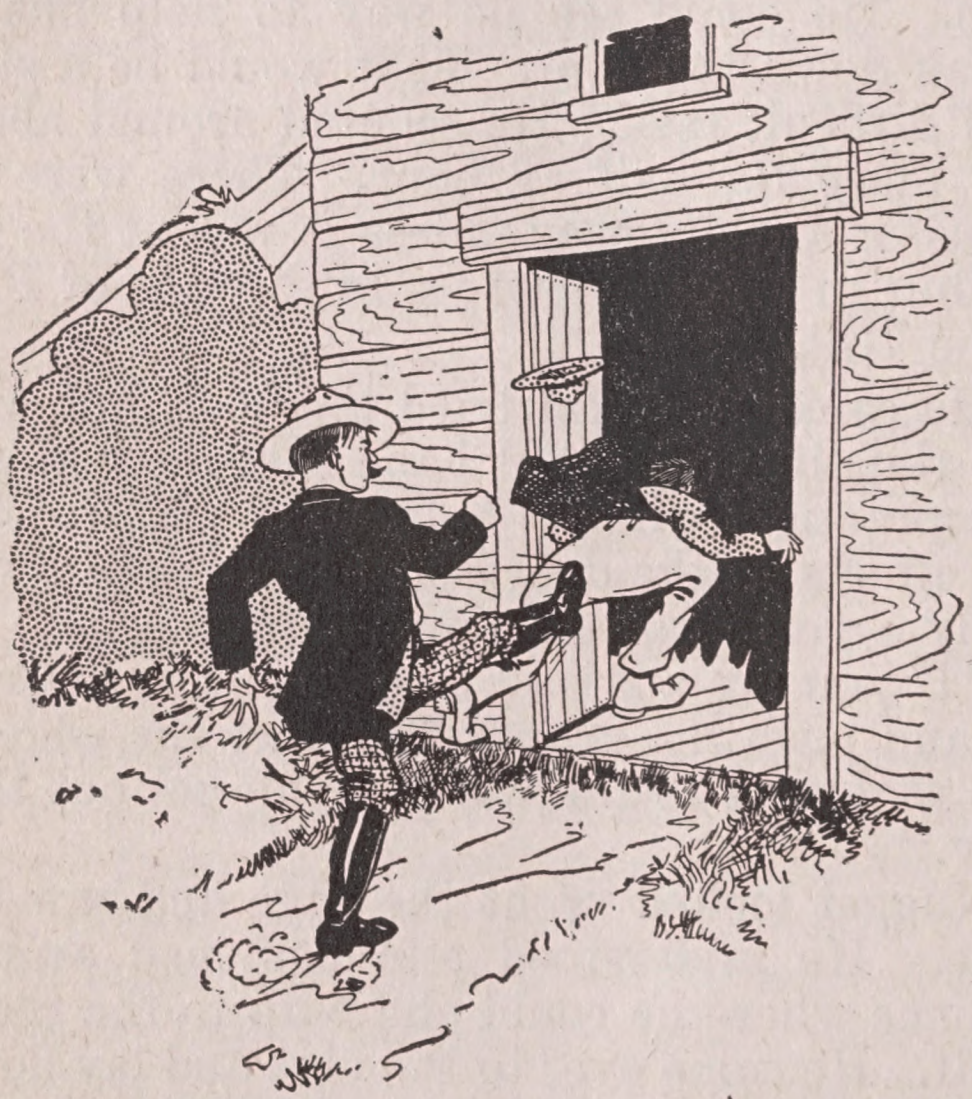
He came back and tried the door, but with the rude instrument at hand that method was not practical without help from within. But his efforts at the door had been heard. Presently a voice called from within.

"If you are a friend to help one in distress go and push the grapevine under the edge of the roof next to the wall. I can get out that way."

Nugget looked up at the edge and saw the vine. He understood and hastened around at once where he could climb up to the rocky shelf. He came over to the vine and lay down flat so that he could reach out and swing it across to a point where he could now see an arm reaching forward to grasp it.

He had just taken hold to make his first

effort when a heavy weight crashed down upon the small of his back. It was the knee of a man. His two wrists were caught and drawn back, where they could be crossed and tied. Then he was brought to his feet facing Val Hone.



"Everything is coming my way at last," exulted the captor, shoving his captive down around the rocks to the door of the peculiar prison. "You are going in here to stay with-

out food or drink until you give me a map showing where your mine of nuggets is. Then you will get half rations till I find the mine. Then you will be let go free. When I have all I can get of the stuff I'll give you directions where you can find Paquita. If I don't find the mine I'll order this place set on fire, and I'll take Paquita with me to Mexico."

Nugget was shoved inside. The door was then closed on him, securely barred and chained fast.

"Think it over. I'll be back here about the middle of the afternoon to see if you are ready for business," was the parting advice spoken through the closed door.

Pickup came down through the trap door and the two friends recognized each other, brought together in that singular way in that unforeseen peril. They talked it over. The strain and suspense were too much for the sick man and he began to feel dizzy and ill.

"You have been a wonderful friend to me," he said to Pickup with a tinge of hopefulness in his voice. "Without expectation of reward and without any solicitation but that of one needing help, you have cared for me as if I were bound to you by the closest ties of obligation. I never experienced such a thing before. Something may happen to me by violence or illness, so I'm going to make

you an equal partner with me in the mine, and trust that you will see to it that Paquita gets my half."

Pickup was silent, not knowing what to reply, and Nugget proceeded to give him a detailed description how to find it.

Nugget grew rapidly more feverish and Pickup took him to the upper floor, where he could make him more comfortable upon a bed of boxes.

Then Pickup tried again to use his signal of distress, but the handkerchief had not been waved back and forth more than a dozen times when a hand reached quickly down over the ledge and jerked the white flag from the stick.

An hour or so later, Pickup heard the voice of Val Hone calling at the door. He went down to the ground floor to answer the summons.

"Have you come to your senses about that mine?" inquired the enemy.

"Yes," replied Pickup. "Nugget is upstairs sick and asleep. He has told me exactly how to find the mine. You can now deal with me about it. I'm ready for business, but first I've got to have water for Nugget. He's feverish. You may as well bring food with it. I won't draw a line till I get water."

Val Hone stood a moment without reply, as

if studying whether to require unconditional surrender to his demands, then thinking that the easier way might be the quickest, he muttered his disgust and left. Pickup did not know whether this meant compliance or merciless abandonment. He was greatly relieved from the depressing suspense when some one arrived and shoved a jug of water into one of the window holes, and followed it with a loaf of bread and a lump of cheese.

He took the water up to Nugget and satisfied the feverish thirst. Then he came back to his negotiation with Val Hone.

"I have a pencil but no paper," he said to his captor.

Val Hone shoved in a half sheet of letter paper.

"This is not large enough," the boy asserted.

Val Hone shoved in an entire sheet, one side of which had writing upon it.

"I'll have it ready inside of ten minutes," was the response.

Presently the work was done. A large piece of greasy white wrapping paper was shoved through the window and eagerly grasped by the man outside.

"The map is so big I had to use the wrapping paper that was on the loaf of bread," was the explanation.

There it was, an elaborate map with detailed description below. Val Hone was hilarious as well as vindictive.

"I know men that know that country like a book," he explained, "and if the mine can't be found by the description I'll be back here by tomorrow night and set this place on fire. You won't have the chance of rats on a ship ripped open by an iceberg."

Val Hone left and Pickup hurried back up to the loft. Nugget was sleeping soundly. The boy began making a pyramid of boxes against the inside wall. When this was done he climbed up to the top of the wall under the eaves of the ledge where he could hear the cooing, clucking sounds of pigeons hovering about their nests. They were quite tame as if they could not conceive of any danger in that safe retreat. By stirring them around with a stick as they flew in and out he was able to make them come quite near to him. Presently he succeeded in catching two of them. On the two pieces of letter paper he wrote in large letters: "Pickup and Nugget are prisoners in the house in Pine Cone Bluff, in danger of death. Help! Help! See Uncle Jeremiah, Green Tree Hotel." He tied the papers around the feet of the pigeons so they could not stand, and then he tied a string about their wings, so that the wings were

held half open. Taking them both to the top of the wall near the outer edge of the overhanging ledge, he threw them out as far as he could towards the woods away from the bluff in the direction of the city. To his gratification he saw them fly straight in the direction he had thrown them. One tried to alight on a tree, but failing to do so flew on.

He came back by his sleeping companion, having done all he knew to do. It was taking a frightful chance, but he had taken it and there was nothing more left but to await the issue.

XIX.

THE BLACK HAND LOVE MESSAGE.

Uncle Jeremiah became more and more alarmed as the night came on with no explanation of the absence of either Molly or Merrilee. By ten o'clock the suspense became intolerable. He called up Frank Mulford and told him of the unexplainable situation. Mulford came over to the Green Tree Hotel for a conference. He called up several of the companies engaged in hiring out automobiles. One was found that had let out a machine to Rig Veda to go to Pine Cone Hill and he had not returned.

Nothing more could be done that night, but at the arrival of clear daylight Mulford was driving a machine at the speed limit toward the indefinite object known as Pine Cone Hill. By an hour after sun-up he had explored the way quite well around the foothills, when he struck the trail of an automobile leading up into the underbrush covering the rise into the bluffs. He stopped his machine and followed the trail, which presently showed three tracks. Up in the bushes he found the car. It was in good order. This looked indeed alarming. To be sure, his eye

was unpracticed in the lore of trails or he might have seen much more. As it was, he could see nothing in the region around that had any promise of information unless it was a farmhouse to be seen on a distant hilltop. He went back to his machine and drove on toward the house. Arriving there, he soon felt that he had been well paid for his visit. The passengers of the abandoned car had been there all night and the guests had departed not more than half an hour before. The farmer's wife told him all she knew and he started off in hot haste after the pedestrians, who alone would be able to explain the mysterious abandonment of the automobile.

In a few minutes he came in sight of two figures trudging along toward the station, as if they were in some weary retreat from a disastrous defeat. They were indeed two rather dilapidated and lugubrious looking objects, as they turned on hearing the automobile behind them. Merrilee at once recognized Mulford. With an irrepressible shout of relief from the tension of the recent experiences she hailed his approach.

Meanwhile, Mulford was mentally estimating Rig Veda.

The resulting conviction was one not calculated to cement any ties of friendship.

"Why are you not going to your automobile?" inquired Mulford.

"For all we know," replied Rig Veda, "we are doing so. It was gone when we went to it last evening. So we took the chance of finding it straying around somewhere on our way to the station."

"It has come back," replied Mulford. "You will find it where you left it."

"Will you go back with me?" Mulford in-

quired of Merrilee, "or will you complete your journey with this man?"

"To be sure," replied Rig Veda for her, "your car is ready. Mine has deceived us once. It may do so again. I believe in the reliable. We are compelled to guess at life as it comes, but we can make it sure as it goes. As long as any difficulty or doubt survives there is in a thing neither reality nor success. I believe what you say, but I don't trust the machine."

He helped Merrilee into the car, turned with a gesture of farewell and strode away toward the distant automobile that was said to have returned from its mysterious night's work.

When Merrilee reached the Green Tree Hotel she found Uncle Jeremiah worrying the police officers over the phone and stirring up the detective bureau with well peppered sarcasm.

The most that could be promised anywhere was a kind of dragnet search, because no one appeared to be able to get any clues by which to arrive anywhere outside the labyrinth of events.

Uncle Jeremiah, however, found a new idea. It buzzed like a bee in his ear. He had seen something of the devotion and efficiency of the boy scouts. The campfire girls seemed

to be under a similar training for alertness and efficiency. Why not enlist both organizations in a search for Pickup and Paquita? Success is not to be assured through any neglect of the means. Mulford and Merrilee liked the idea. It was forthwith put into execution. The addresses of all the members of both organizations in the city and suburbs were soon supplied with a descriptive circular offering a large reward by Uncle Jeremiah of the Green Tree Hotel to any camp, and to any boy or girl, who would supply any information leading to the discovery of the campfire girl Paquita and the boy scout known as Pickup. The letter-circular contained Paquita's picture, so that any one seeing her, after looking at the picture, could hardly miss recognizing her as the one wanted.

About the time Uncle Jeremiah was developing his plan of enlisting the boy scouts and campfire girls in the interest of their two imperiled fellows, a janitor in a tenement house adjoining one of the inferior districts discovered a curious object wriggling about on a fire escape in the alleyway across the block. It seemed unable either to get up or down or to stay where it was in any comfort. As he looked, he imagined he could hear faint yells issuing from the struggling bit of animated

color. As the dilapidated old framework of a fire escape had long since failed to be in any condition for service, he decided that a fellow human being of the feminine sex on that broken stairway had certainly fallen into a condition of exceptional difficulty, undoubtedly needing attention. With much of a grouch at the fool women who caused men so much annoyance by not knowing anything, he plodded his way over to the seat of trouble. Locating the distress as being just above the second window, he went into that part of the building, pried open the rusty sash and inquired into the cause of the unusual display.

It was a scared and weeping woman he found. She had been locked up all night in a room on the top story with a little girl. They had put the back of a chair under the lock so the wicked man couldn't get back in to them, but that morning he had come and burst the door in. The little girl had broken out the window sash and climbed up the iron ladder onto the roof. She herself couldn't do that act, so she tried to get down the fire escape away from the angry man. As he was not interested in her, but wanted to take the other captive away with him, he had climbed up on the roof after the escaping girl, but had not come back, and that was two or three hours before.

Molly was duly repentant. The first thought of the gypsy's prophecy made her feel faint and the first sight of a broadbrim made her sick. The janitor helped her from her undignified position with the sage observation that any woman of her age and expe-

rience who would let a man lock her up in the top floor of an old empty house was needing all that was coming to her on a fire escape. But Molly was not interested in advice.

What she most wanted was the Green Tree Hotel. She thought of Abner. Strange that when he was really wanted and needed he was nowhere in sight. She was now willing to go back to the farm and tend to the chickens and cows for the rest of her life.

As she could not trust the street cars even for short distances, the janitor got the attention of a passing cab and she was soon telling her distracting adventures to Merrilee and Uncle Jeremiah.

Paquita was now indeed in trouble. To be sure, she was conducting her share in the experiences quite heroically, but there was extreme danger to her in the course of events. What had happened now? The last Molly had seen of her was when the girl climbed up the fire ladder, while Val Hone was bursting through the door, and Molly was trying to get away down the rattling fire escape. But the villain had no interest in Molly, and he could see only one other way for the girl to get out of view. Val Hone went up the fire ladder and climbed out upon the flat top of the big building. He ran to the brick wall that enclosed the roof, where he might look over and find what had become of the fugitive. She had got away from the first building. The next roof was about six feet lower. He had hoped she could not climb over. But

she had done so and was just disappearing over the far wall down the fire ladder at that place as Val Hone came into view. When he arrived at the ladder her nimble feet had taken her down so rapidly that she was just reaching the ground. Some one had seen her making that hasty descent, so remarkable for a girl. Val Hone saw that he wore the uniform of a district messenger boy. The pursuer's efforts were fruitless. She was now out of his reach and he had other affairs so pressing that he could not now follow her, but the next time she would not escape. He resolved next time to make assurance doubly sure. He would take her to Mexico.

It was a wonderful story of exciting adventure that Roy Jones of the Quick Messenger Service heard in explanation of her escape down the fire ladder from the top of the old tenement houses. It fired the boy's sense of the romantic. He was then on his way to deliver an important message. It was but little out of his way to go by his mother's home, where his mother and sister would be glad to give her a breakfast, which would now also serve as noon lunch. He would be back in an hour and would take her to Uncle Jeremiah at the Green Tree Hotel. He was pleased to assure her that he was already acquainted with the fine old gentleman.

This seemed the thing for her to do and in a little while she was seated at the table in a neat dining room, satisfying herself from a hunger that had begun to be exceedingly clamorous.

At the end of her refreshing meal she was standing by the window with the messenger

boy's mother and sister, when their attention was attracted by some excitement far below them in the roadway. A crowd was out in

the center of the street looking up into the sky. Then they caught a glimpse of an aeroplane flashing by just above the tops of the houses, on the way to the aviation field at the western end of the grounds. The little girl, who was about Paquita's age, looked very doleful.

"It's the beginning of the big prize-flying contest," she said, "and Roy promised to take me. I never saw flying machines."

"And I never saw one before!" cried Paquita, with the enthusiasm upon her of seeing new sights. "Let's go! I don't have to go to the Green Tree Hotel till night. Let's go."

Just then the door opened and the boy came in, full of excitement.

"They say there is going to be twenty machines or more in the air all at once. Let's all go."

The excitement became unanimous and they went.

All the thrills common to an aviation meet were theirs and the hours fled like swift-winged minutes until the declining sun was tingeing the Golden Gate with its mellow gold. The show was over. Those permitted inside where the flying machines were, stood idly around discussing the day's events, and the people were dispersing. Paquita and her

friends were walking along the fence on their way out of the Fair grounds when she called attention to a pigeon fluttering along on the ground with wings extended and something white tied on its feet. Her sympathies were aroused. It was not right to treat the poor bird that way.

"Ah, it's just some advertising scheme," asserted the worldly-wise messenger boy, "or some newspaper fake."

"But it hurts the pigeon," declared the girl with the zeal of a humane society. "I'm going to set it free."

She began to climb the fence with the agility of a squirrel. Roy Jones was astonished with admiration. He could hardly have equaled it himself. He must show her what he could do in the way of climbing, and he was over upon the ground a close second with her. A guard seeing the fence-climbing exhibit felt a pang of duty strike him, and he hastened to curb the athletics of the youngsters.

They had caught the pigeon and were unwrapping the paper from its feet when he arrived. He considered it his business to take charge of everything not regularly in the scheme of things. Therefore he took the unwrapping process into his own hands. A curious crowd began to collect, among them

some policemen and several reporters. There was writing on both sides of the sheet of paper which he held up for all to read who could see. On one side was Pickup's appeal to Uncle Jeremiah to be saved from the murderous designs of Val Hone. The other side was Molly's appeal to Mr. Val to come to the Green Tree Hotel and find his fortune. In the first some of the sensational reporters saw a chance for a great rescue story, in the other the imaginative ones saw a great black-hand plot worthy of big front page headlines for a week or more.

Paquita crowded in and was one to get a glimpse of Pickup's appeal to Uncle Jeremiah. She knew exactly where the two friends were imprisoned, for she had been shut up in that place herself. She tried frantically to make somebody understand, but she was considered a nuisance and was unceremoniously shoved aside. Nobody could believe that things ever happened that way.

Utterly unable to make any of them listen seriously to her, she went away with her new friends and told the story to them. They believed it and Roy Jones saw a new field of glory open before him, as one to rescue the perishing.

It was rapidly closing in dark when they arrived at the messenger boy's home to get

their supper. They found two letters in their mail box, one to the boy, the other to the girl. Both were the same. Each contained a circular. One was from the headquarters of the boy scouts, the other from the headquarters of the campfire girls. Paquita was sitting impatiently by the window, looking down into the street, thinking that the wild life of being lost on the plains, in the midst of interminable undulations of sand and sagebrush, was a rose-garden experience by the side of this wild battle of warring wills.

The brother and sister looked at each other as they read the circular of reward offered to boy scouts and campfire girls. Then they looked at the picture and at the girl by the window. They agreed. The lost girl was there by the window. The lost boy was prisoner somewhere in the bluffs of Pine Cone Hill. It was a wonderful opportunity. Roy's company of boy scouts were then having their annual outing in the valley just beyond the place named in the pigeon message, and his sister's campfire organization was camping in the edge of the Muir woods next to the scene of the impending tragedy.

The mother was taken into hasty consultation in an adjoining room. A plan at once sprang into their minds. They would organ-

ize a rescue expedition of campfire girls and boy scouts.

Paquita was unconscious of the sudden admiration with which she was contemplated by the returning trio. But she was conscious of a remarkable tenderness and care exercised over her. If all strangers treated others like that and all friends could be even more so, the "kingdom-come" would be here. There would be no use of any dying to go to a better place.

The phone was soon busy. The story of the lost girl in their house was told to others who had received the circular. It was a chance to make a great name for the campfire girls and boy scouts. They would rescue Pickup and present him and Paquita together to Uncle Jeremiah, with glory and reward awaiting their courage and skill.

As it was a bright, full-moon night, and delay was dangerous, the idea rapidly matured to send at least three automobiles to each camp filled with parents and members who could go. The two camps would meet about daylight and swarm around Pine Cone Hill till they found and liberated the prisoners. Each one of the rescue expedition was provided with a fierce whistle. A code of signals was agreed upon that would bring all together at any point of danger or special discov-

ery. As the boy prisoner was Paquita's friend, of course she should be taken along.

By midnight the cavalcade of rescuers was on its way to arouse the respective camps and arrange the plan of conquest.

XX.

MIND-READING ON A PIGEON HUNT.

Captain Mulford was issuing final directions for closing out the aviation meet when one of the guards came running up to him with the startling news that there was a riot brewing over some quarrel among a lot of people near the front entrance. He hastened across to the gathering crowd, especially anxious that nothing happen to mar his record in management.

The story was soon told him and he understood much more than he revealed. However, he did not get to see the two mysterious notes found on the sheet of paper, for the police had carried the paper away as a special find for the police department.

One of the reporters had the pigeon. He came up to Mulford flushed with a suggestion.

"Say," he began mysteriously, "I've just struck a stunt in my mind that will put the Exposition on the map bigger than the European war. My paper would put up the stuff to finance such a scheme, but it will make a bigger story if there is some kind of a love interest backing it. Do you know anyone who will put up the cash to pay an aviator to fol-

low this bird to its nest? Of course, that's where the fellow got it who wrote the note. All the evidence shows it. We could tie white paper streamers on one foot, so the bird could be followed and we would have as a newspaper sensation the race of a flying machine with a carrier pigeon, the only hope of a fond parent for his che-ild."

The proposition looked more plausible to Mulford than the reporter guessed.

"Yes, I know a man who will put up the money to pay the best aviator we have on the grounds," replied Mulford. "It's not exactly his child, but he is about as much interested. You go at once to the phone and call up Uncle Jeremiah at the Green Tree Hotel and get him out here as soon as it can be done. Give him to understand that it means a plan for the quickest possible rescue of his boy Pickup and probably the boy's friend known as Nugget. Get him while I go over and have a talk with the aviators about the exploit."

Both were away at once on their mission, the reporter guarding the pigeon as a most precious possession, one out of which he was expecting name and fame in a night, with a raise of salary next day.

Uncle Jeremiah got the hurry-up message and took a waiting automobile at once for the aviation field. There he found Mulford, the

aviator and the reporter in a hot discussion. Uncle Jeremiah settled the question. The bird could not fly back that afternoon. It had struggled with its bonds until it was completely exhausted. It must have water and food and a night's rest. The night was then coming rapidly down upon them. Nothing could be done till daylight. For an agreed upon price the aviator would endeavor to follow the pigeon at clear dawn the next morning, and drop a large piece of white cloth at the point where the pigeon went down. Mulford would be at Pine Cone Hill with some picked men, awaiting the flying machine and watching for the drop of the white cloth. Accordingly the reporter took the feathered messenger where it could be attended to with the tenderest care and the others went to their respective places, eager for the test of the coming morning.

When Uncle Jeremiah arrived at the hotel, he found another singular surprise awaiting him. The manager took him over to a cage containing a pigeon that a farmer boy had brought in about the time that the old man had been called away. The message tied to its feet had been sent to police headquarters.

However, two notes had been left for him which doubtless more fully explained the case. He went to his room to read them.

The first was from Molly. It was too complicated for anyone to unravel who already had his head full.

"Dear Uncle Jeremiah:

"I am gone I know not where. A policeman and a reporter came to my room looking for a black-hand person who had written a decoy letter to Mr. Val. For the first time in my life I had to lie and I done it. I can't afford to be shanghied for my crimes. I'd rather go home. If you hear of me restoring the farm, don't be agitated. It may be more suitable to my peace of mind. Molly."

The other note was from Merrilee. It contained more definite information of immediate importance.

"Dear Uncle Jeremiah:

"The information at hand seems to show that Val Hone has locked up somewhere about Pine Cone Hill, not only Pickup, but also Paquita and her father. Rig Veda and I have once before been to the hut where we believe they are held captive. The hotel detective is going along with us as protector and helper. He will drive the machine. We believe we can liberate the prisoners. There is no time to lose and I am wild for the excitement of the adventure. Merrilee."

"That's it," exclaimed Uncle Jeremiah,

"she is wild for the excitement of adventure. She thinks all she has to do is to walk up there and yell, 'Ho! Ye prisoners, come forth to liberty. Here are your rescuers.' But these young adventurers want the glory of it. Ah, the reckless impulse of youth."

The sigh was cut short by his sudden thought of the morning excitement. He left a call to be waked an hour before daylight and then went to his slumbers for the best rest he could get on such a troubled night.

Meanwhile, Rig Veda, with the house detective and Merrilee, had hastened with all speed to restore themselves in their own estimation as rescuers of the imprisoned. They drove the machine up to the same spot at Pine Cone Hill where they had been before and alighted ready for the expedition to the little old stone hut in the side of Pine Cone Hill.

"I haven't had anything to boast of in so long a time," said Rig Veda with a pouter-pigeon swelling of the chest, "that I hardly know how, but I feel the vital elation coming back. Now watch me make good and verify my title to be hero-poet, philosopher, detective and all-around efficiency expert."

Rig Veda was attentive to his unconventional and adventurous companion, but never intrusive. His demeanor never suggested any encroachment on any view of the purest

friendship. She had always felt at ease with him. And it was even so now as she scaled the bluff with him, leaving the detective at a watchful distance in the rear.

But, as soon as they had started off around the rough pathway leading to the open space where the hut was, Merrilee felt a sudden gust of alarm for what was before them. Until now her enthusiasm for achieving a heroic rescue had kept her in bounding spirits for the conquest. Now that the unknown danger was near she could feel its uncanny presence.

"Aren't you armed for emergencies?" she asked.

"Yes, with intelligence," he replied. "One who does not win with intelligence is not human and can neither enjoy nor keep his success. One who can not do more with his wit than with a bullet has a gunbarrel head. I tell you I am a poet, and I shall soon prove to you that I am a hero-poet, living not ideals but life."

The loquacious philosopher had to become silent as they climbed out through the upper ledges of the bluff and obtained a view of the solitary hut for which they were searching. They went up to the door and found it open, but at this visit the Indian woman was at home. She stood in the middle of the floor, arms akimbo, waiting for them. A fleeting

grin of recognition softened her countenance for a moment and then her face relapsed into its habitual blankness.

Rig Veda asked some questions about the sightseeing around there and then said that he had seen some pigeons flying around, of which he would like very much to have a pair. Did she know where she could get a pair for him? He held up a ten dollar gold piece as the reward offered. She looked at it greedily for a moment and then put a shawl over her head, saying, "We see," as she went out.

Rig Veda watched her through a chink in the wall till she disappeared down around the rocks on the side next to the higher ridge.

"I must follow her," he said, "and it's got to be a mighty careful job or my wit may sure enough need a gun to make up for the weakness. While I am out you take a look in the cellar that is under this floor. You'll find a door somewhere. The prisoners may be here but I think not as there are no pigeons around here. I'll be back as soon as I find where Pickup got his pigeons, and I am not supposing the Indian woman will go anywhere else to get one."

He hurried out and slipped cautiously around the rock to follow the swift-footed woman. Merrilee sat a few moments somewhat excited and yet uncertain about her ad-

venture in rescuing the endangered persons. Then she realized that she must do her part and do it quickly.

She searched carefully over the floor but no trap door could be found to the cellar that Rig Veda said was below. She went outside the house and at the rear found under a huge climbing rose bush a slanting cellar door. It was closed by a hinged draw-bar and fastened with chain and padlock, but the key was in the lock. She soon freed the draw-bar so she could lift it and set it to hold up the lifted door. Then she went inside, where she found a very comfortably furnished room, fairly well lighted by the wide chinks in the foundation of the floor.

As soon as she found that it contained no one, she turned to go out, when the door fell to its place with a loud bang. She attempted to lift it but the hinged bar seemed to have fallen back in its place and locked her in. She listened long, after she gave up trying to open the door, but not a sound of anyone was to be heard.

Meantime, Rig Veda had run across to the rocky descent and crawled down among the broken ledges, looking for the Indian woman, that he might follow her to the pigeons' nest. But he could get no glimpse of her. He had begun to feel something of alarm creeping in

on him and was pausing under the edge of a shelving rock to come to some conclusion, when he felt his arms suddenly bound to his side by the loop of a lasso. Before he could think how to exert himself another loop of it came over his shoulders and then another and another. A jerk brought his back up tight against the rock. Then the rope became steady in a groove and was evidently stretched tight and fast by being fastened to something above.

He had seen no one and had heard no one. But, as he stood there half suspended, though not as uncomfortable as it might seem, he had time to think it out that this was the work of the Indian woman who had seen through his subterfuge, and had prepared herself for him as he came by on her trail.

Rig Veda was exasperated. His wits had been insufficient. To be strung up like a ham, when so much was involved, was decidedly distasteful. It lowered his self-respect. Besides, as the afternoon turned into night, the monotonous position became uncomfortable. He felt painful alarm for Merrilee. He could make no guess what might happen to her or what she would do. He tried every imaginable device to free himself but to no use. It looked as if he were destined to hang there in that silent spot till sure enough cured of all earthly ills. But in the stillness, noises came

keenly to his strung up ears. Unquestionably, he heard the sounds of shuffling steps coming that way. Presently he could see the form of a man slipping around through the bushes several rods below him. As the form came nearer, he discovered that it was his chauffeur,

the hotel detective, whom he had almost given up as either having abandoned him or as having been likewise made prisoner.

"Here, man," he called softly. "You are getting off of the trail. Come up this way."

The chauffeur stopped and peered through at the almost indiscernible object strung up against the rock

"Who is it?" he called cautiously.

"It's myself," replied the captive. "The hero-poet who is vindicating the power of luck and wit over all vulgar appeal to force and firearms."

"How did you come to be in this fix?" asked the driver, looking fearfully around as if expecting the same fate.

"It is more than I can imagine," he obscurely explained, "and so more than I can put into language. Explanations are usually superfluous. Get busy and cut me loose. There is a woman up at the house waiting for you to take her back to the hotel, and it's getting late for such folks to be out."

Rig Veda was soon liberated and the two men went boldly up to the house. No one was anywhere to be seen. They went in and searched around but were unable to discover anything giving them a clue to the vanished woman.

Presently a voice from beneath the floor attracted their attention.

"Who are you?" it asked in very tremulous tones.

"It is I. Be not afraid," replied Rig Veda,

recognizing the prisoner below. "Behold the hero-poet comes to the rescue."

Merrilee had certainly never heard a more welcome voice. He soon found the cellar door, broke the padlock with a stone and set her free. In a few minutes they were hastening around the hill and down the bluff to the automobile.

"Take her as quickly as you can to the Green Tree Hotel," he ordered as he closed the door of the car, while he remained, to their surprise, on the outside. "I came here for pigeons, and I'm going to have pigeons, or their equivalent, before I return. The hero-poet hath spoken. So mote it be."

The machine lurched forward and whirled away along the uncertain road. Merrilee looked back and saw Rig Veda climbing the pathway toward the home of the Indian woman.

His eyes were somewhat keener and more alert as the result of his recent experiences. He carefully surveyed, as much as he was able in the growing darkness, each open space before him. It was this caution that enabled him, at a point of observation, just beyond where he had been found, to see the Indian woman peering out from a hiding place to see if her prisoner was still securely held up against the rock. He had taken the part of

the lasso that had been cut from him and made it into a loop, which he now proposed to use on her as she had used it on him. Remembering her superior craft by nature, he shrank back in the crevice of an adjacent rock and waited for her to pass. Slowly she crept by, and when she had gone a step beyond him, she paused to study the unexpected appearance of the spot where she had left her prisoner. This was his opportunity. The noose went over her head and instantly tightened her arms to her body. She whirled about and he wrapped the lariat again around her and slipped it through into a knot. She made no move to run, but stared at him with a grunt more of admiration for his dexterity than of resentment.

When he had her secure, he took hold of one of her wrists with his fingers on her pulse. The other hand he placed upon her neck, gripping it so that his fingers pressed tightly upon her throat.

"Now move toward the pigeons," he ordered. "I can read your mind through the points of my fingers. I will know when you are going toward them. You can't fool me and I will make it very uncomfortable for you, now and hereafter, if you try to deceive me. Move on. I must have pigeons before it is too dark to see the way."

As an expert in reading the emotions through the muscles, nerves and pulse, he had many times performed rare feats in reading minds so as to locate hidden articles in a most inconceivable way. He soon found that he

was having considerably more trouble than he expected in reading through his fingers the mind of an Indian woman. According to professional mind-reading signs, she certainly changed her mind many times. At least there were many times in which he changed his

guess. The twitching muscle and the quickened pulse seemed to be no indication that she was going anywhere. It did not seem to occur to her that this undignified proceeding had any scientific value. Rig Veda had triumphantly found many a pin hidden in the back of a chair among a lot of friendly doubters in a parlor, but this was no parlor game, however confidently he had begun it.

Night had deepened into many conflicting shadows, but the big, round, red moon was becoming clearer, and was rapidly making amends for the loss of the sun. They came out into an open space and beheld the shadowy outline of a house, around which there was an indistinguishable background of rocky forms.

"If this is the place," said Rig Veda, pausing in the bewildering uncertainty of his baffled art, "show me at once where they are. If I can get one or two, I will give you the gold piece. If you have misled me, I'll have to show you what it means to deceive the elect, and to defeat the intelligence of a superior system."

This roll of words as a threat brought forth only a stolid grunt, but, as if consenting, she led the way around the rim of rocks, at about the same distance, to a point where she came straight up to the house, under a wide spreading bush. She stooped and raised an object

he could not see and said: "Put your hand in there and you get them."

He cautiously felt around to find what was

there, when, too quick for any defense, her shoulder came into his side like a catapult. He pitched forward into an opening where his head cracked against the wall, so that he seemed to be floating through a vision of the milky way for an hour, before he could get the use of his hands and feet. Then he arose full of righteous wrath, to subject his captive to proper discipline, but his head bumped hard against an immovable covering that shut

him in. Silent helplessness enveloped him. He found that he was in the cellar of the house he had left to follow the Indian woman. His superior intelligence had gained him nothing but a prison.

XXI.

MOBILIZING THE ARMIES OF RESCUE.

Merrilee sank humbly back in her seat, when the automobile started away on its retreat, as it were, from the zone of heroic endeavor. She felt that her two adventures with Rig Veda in the cause of brilliant liberation had come to an inglorious end. However, he had stuck to his job and that stubborn perseverance still upheld somewhat in her appreciation his clamorous claims as a hero-poet. Human imagination in its romantic interests is never so much concerned with results as with the brilliancy of the way.

The hotel detective, much disgruntled with the slump in things heroic, drove the machine as rapidly as possible so as to arrive at the ferry before dark. But the uncertain roadway misled him, and Merrilee drew his attention to the fact that he was on a very roundabout course when he came up by the farm house where she had spent the night of her first unlucky adventure. Both of them were suffering from thirst and they decided to stop and get a drink. There they came upon an unexpected situation. Here was where the pigeon was found that had been taken in to

Uncle Jeremiah. From the fact that the one who wrote the note had been at their house, and they knew something of the villainy from others who had been there, they were greatly

concerned about it, and had gathered in their immediate neighbors for a conference. There was actually crime going on in their territory and it must be suppressed. The eyes of the world were now on San Francisco Bay and there must be nothing bad to be seen about Muir Woods.

Merrilee was now able to add much more to their information and incidentally to their indignation. She left them arranging a plan to surround the Indian woman's house and force her to lead them to the prisoners, if they were unable to find the prison themselves.

When she arrived at the Green Tree Hotel, she found Uncle Jeremiah in the midst of reporters and policemen. Soon she learned the plans, and had a conversation over the phone with Captain Mulford, making arrangements to ride with him out to Pine Cone Hill at an early hour in the morning, in order to witness the end of the race between the pigeon and the aeroplane.

Meanwhile, the rescue division of the boy scouts and campfire girls, under the leadership and chaperonage of officers, guardians and parents, were gathering at their appointed place of meeting down in the valley near the base of Pine Cone Bluffs. They were noiseless and without any light but that of the full moon now flooding the woods from its western incline. The domestic science members served luncheon and the advance exploring-scouts were sent out to locate the region into which the combined camps would swarm with overwhelming force to their deed of heroic rescue. If possible, the sweeping assault was to be ready by early daylight. It was a weighty

responsibility. In the awe of their romantic mission, they whispered their opinions and orders. As the girls all had on white dresses it was decided that the boys must surround the house without the campfire girls coming into view and make the rush to free the prisoners. The signal for the rush, however, should be a vigorous blowing of the whistles by all, so as to make as much of a din as possible. At the psychological moment, the white circle should spring forth to be seen as avenging angels, inspiring the warriors to deeds of valor, and striking the enemy with dismay, should such a person have the folly to be present.

Meanwhile, Rig Veda, in the seclusion of his dungeon, had fallen fast asleep, free from every care, back into the region where everything prospers, and everyone succeeds. But a shrill whistle near his head startled him wide awake. Several answers were heard at various points around. Was a clan of bandits gathering? He listened intently, not being sure whether it was friends or foes. He could hardly believe that Val Hone had organized a band of looters, and he knew of no reason why he should be the object of so many friends. Cautious, shuffling steps were heard all around. A loud rap was struck on the

front door. No answer being given, there was a furious series of them.

"Surrender, you devils," called out someone, with the voice of a victorious commander calling down a fort. "Surrender, or we will burn the house down over you. We are honest farmers and won't stand for any robbers in our neighborhood."

To have the house set on fire over his head was an unpleasant prospect, and Rig Veda at once decided that the time had come for a hero-poet to be humble.

"Come in," he called out. "You are welcome to all you can find."

He thought that invitation was fair enough and so became silent to await results.

Unable to get the door open by peaceful means, they swung a rock against it and the whole force went in together. A glance around made it appear that the house was inhabited by nothing but a voice.

In the midst of the superstitious silence occasioned by this discovery, one of them heard an unaccountable noise outside. He stepped to the door. A hand came around the corner and caught him by the ankle. He went headlong upon the ground with a wild yell.

"Help! Help!" he cried. "The devils have got me."

His frightened friends heard him thump

heavily upon the earth, and the silence that followed was indeed profound, except for the sound of the door slammed shut.

"We'll get the rest of you fools at daylight," shouted one of the foe outside, and all about the house became as silent as a tomb. Rig Veda found the situation to be too complicated for ordinary solution and he decided to forget it until morning.

The advance boy scouts who had gone on ahead to discover the best way to get up to the house described by Paquita, came back with word that they had found the house and

could see some one on the outside guarding it. This added spice to the enterprise. There was indeed an enemy at hand and the boys might have to take the enemy by surprise, perhaps in a hand-to-hand conflict.

The boy scouts moved on cautiously ahead, following their leader in a fine enveloping column while their guardians strolled along safely in the rear, as a supporting column, morally if not physically rear-guard for the advance brigade. The excitement was increased as they came to their destination. At the edge of the open space, among the rocks, just back of where the boys were concealed, the campfire girls were suitably deployed, ready for their angel-inspiration act. The boys were stationed along the edge of the open space, with swelling chests charged with pride at the witnesses they had looking so admiringly upon their brave procedure.

A momentary thrill of sanguinary battle went through the besiegers as they plainly saw three forms seated upon the ground close up in the shadow of the old house. This was greater odds than they had bargained for, but the wall of white forms back below them made retreat unthinkable if not impossible.

A venturesome boy crawled up quite close and brought back the information that there were, sure enough, three forms, but that one

was tied to a bush and the other two were asleep leaning up against the wall of the house on each side of the steps.

It was just coming clear daylight when Captain Mulford and Merrilee arrived at the spot where Merrilee had come twice before, at the foothill upon which rested the bluffs around Pine Cone Hill. They were amazed to find that half a dozen automobiles filled with reporters and their friends had arrived there before them, and several were in sight on the way. A select few were to witness rare sport. To see an aviator in his machine follow a pigeon that he might locate the prison where a desperado held his victims, was regarded as excitement enough to bring everybody there who had the good fortune to hear about it. Newspaper editors were expecting the biggest story of the season and all wanted to have a part in the rescue that was to be made historic by such a feat.

Uncle Jeremiah went out before daylight to the aviation field with the second pigeon. This was the one which had been brought to him at the hotel by the farmer's boy. White paper streamers tied on to the feet of these two companion birds made it so the aviator could start his machine at the moment of the first clear light in the sky.

Uncle Jeremiah, according to arrangement,

went with his two birds far up into the Tower of Jewels in the Fair Grounds. He saw the aeroplane arise from the aviation field. As it came near high over the Tower he tossed the two birds into the air in the direction of their homes. Though it was just beginning to be clear dawn, the birds were plainly visible with the long white paper streamers to their feet. As far as he could see either birds or airship, they were moving evenly on the way to the mountain prison.

At this time, the boy scouts were gathering their feet under themselves, so to speak, for the leap toward the silent forms guarding the prison.

A solitary scream from the whistle of the leader, Roy Jones, split the ears of the sleepers at the door of the hut. Then there was a circle of such sounds, one blast after another, outrivaling Gabriel's horn. The two forms at the door struck the ground and went around the house like rolling barrels. The enveloping regiment of boy scouts leaped out from their defenses and crept forward. The white angels of inspiration appeared upon the rocks.

And then there was a pause. An unexpected sound froze them in their places. The fierce rattle of artillery in the air broke upon their ears. Before they could get a second breath or another thought it seemed to be

upon them. It passed over their heads and away on the other side. They realized that they had been visited by a flying machine. At the same moment a huge and increasing volume of smoke was seen to be boiling up in a short turn around the bluff. As if all this were not enough to complicate the scene, half a dozen men came plunging up to them over the rocks.

"Did you see where the pigeons went down?" they yelled in great excitement. "Did you see the aviator drop a white cloth?"

Then they saw the boy scouts in belligerent attitude and the flock of campfire girls spread around on the neighboring rocks.

"What does all this mean?" cried Captain Mulford as Merrilee and several other women came breathless up to the group of men.

The door of the house opened and several shame-faced farmers came out. They untied their comrade who was fastened to the bush. At that, two policemen, who had been detailed to save the reputation of the force, appeared from behind the building.

Then a shout of laughter went up from the campfire girls. They were the first to understand that everybody had been making the others prisoners.

"But the prisoners are there," insisted Roy Jones. "I was scouting around and I could

see signs of them in the cellar. They may be gagged there and so can't holler."

The whole crowd went around to the cellar door. A big stone was lifted off of the door and the place was opened up. The excited crowd gathered around to see the prisoners come forth from their dungeon. Sure enough, a prisoner appeared. He looked around at the crowd and laughed.

"Thank you," he said with a very profound bow of acknowledgment. "But why are you all standing around here grinning as if you were being entertained with a slap-stick burlesque? Don't you see the house over there

burning down upon the heads of two prisoners?"

He ran forward past them and disappeared down among the rocks. Merrilee was the first to understand.

"Come on," she cried. "We are at the wrong place to rescue the prisoners."

Mulford was soon at her side, helping her down the rough stairway of rocks. The crowd followed yelling like a mob.

XXII.

A STRENUOUS "GET-AWAY."

Paquita went with the others in full confidence that the boy scouts sent on ahead to find the prison had done so. She had described the place correctly, but in their excitement, the first house they saw in that region was believed to be the one meant. She had been through so much adventure that the expedition did not fire her with the enthusiasm of the others. She did not rush on like the rest. Very soon she found them all ahead of her on the way, and a little later she discovered that they were going to the house in the open space instead of to the house under the ledges. It would not do to call after them and she did not feel any impulse to overtake them. The thought struck her that she could do the liberating act herself. Accordingly, she swerved from the line of march, and carefully searched her way up among the rocks toward the ridge of overhanging ledges, that had become familiar to her through the little windows of her half-day sojourn in the prison. She came up from the rocks almost exactly in front of the door. Daylight was breaking rapidly and she could see quite clearly all about the dark gray

forms looming so coarsely before her. The closest scrutiny convinced her that no watchman or sentinel was anywhere around to interfere. Creeping cautiously up to the door, she rapped briskly with a piece of rock. There was no sound and she called softly.

"Hello! Who's there?"

Then there was the response of Pickup's voice at the door.

"Who are you?"

"That's not the question," was the reply. "Are you the one who has lost a pigeon?"

"All right," was the eager answer. "Have you anything out there with which to pry off the lock on the door?"

Paquita looked about her but saw nothing she could use.

"Here," cried the voice within, "I have found an old claw-hammer. Maybe you can use that."

The claw-hammer fell at her feet from the hole in the wall next to her.

She went to work upon the staples holding the padlock. They began to yield. A moment more and the lock rattled from its place dangling downward against the door. Then rusty hinges groaned and screeched. The rude door swung out and Pickup in a fervor of gratitude, as well as of agreeable astonishment, caught Paquita in his arms and kissed

her till he realized that his conduct was hardly on the program of a boy scout's chivalry. Perhaps this was brought into his consciousness by the impression of someone standing in the door.

"It's my turn now," said an envious voice.

It was Nugget who had become aware of something going on in the room below in time to be an observer of the last act in the scene.

Paquita and Nugget took one glimpse of each other and then with the cry of "Daughter" and "Father" mingled in each other's arms.

But returning consciousness of danger caused them to realize that there was no time to lose. Besides, they were both weak from hunger and half choked with thirst. Nugget was also ill. He staggered back against the wall and then they understood that they must not only get out of danger but the half-starved prisoners must have refreshments. It was not more than half a mile down to their automobiles where there was abundance of food and drink. Closing the door and setting the staples and lock back into place, they hurried on down among the rocks on the way to food and safety.

Hardly were they hidden in the descending ravine, when a cry from Paquita caused them to cower under cover from the scenes they

had just left. She had seen the flutter of a red shawl coming around the jagged rocks on the ledge over the house. Peering cautiously from their hiding place, they could see Ogallalla Sue climbing around to the point where Pickup had fastened the vine by which Paquita had escaped. In a moment she was followed by Val Hone. He had discovered that Pickup's map was imaginary. The prisoners were escaping just in time. They had come to fulfill the threat of vengeance. Val Hone carried a bundle. He laid it down and fastened it to the end of a pole he was carrying with him. Then he set the bundle on fire. When it was thoroughly blazing into a coal, he lifted it out over the edge and thrust it under the eaves of the ledge, over the wall, and broke it loose among the boxes. Very quickly the smoke came pouring up around the rocks and the whole interior was ablaze.

Suddenly there came a swiftly increasing clatter, a most unexpected bombardment of sounds over their heads. Two pigeons, with long paper streamers on their feet, were seen dashing down around the smoke and then off into the woods. An aeroplane appeared close above the highest point of the ridge. As it came over the column of smoke a white body was dropped from the machine. It came spreading out as it fell and settled down over

the head of Val Hone. He fought it off wildly as if it were a demon from the skies coming down to smother him in its folds. Crazed with superstitious awe he flung it out over the ledge where it fell directly in the pathway of the fugitives. They saw that it was a white sheet, evidently dropped as a signal.

Nugget broke the spell of events.

"Come on," he said. "We must get into camp. I feel very faint. We must get to safety."

They went on down to camp, where the two starving ones were soon refreshed. But in the midst of it, Nugget became more faint and ill. He could not stand up.

"We must get him back to the hospital," cried Pickup. "We can't wait to ask leave for one of these automobiles."

They lifted the now unconscious form of Nugget into the car and drove away for the safety of a sick man, who had been much weakened by his recent strenuous experiences.

Val Hone and Ogallalla Sue stood petrified with superstitious awe at the strange experience of the enveloping sheet, until they were aroused by the yelling crowd which was following Rig Veda from the house up in the side of the hill. The surprised criminals had only one thought and that was to get away in the opposite direction. The yelling crowd rushed on down and surged around Rig Veda, who was breaking in the door with a heavy rock. The lock yielded with surprising ease. It had already been broken open. The whole upper part of the house was a furnace of roaring flames, but they saw inside through the open door soon enough to find that no one was in the lower room. As the floor gave way, the whole front wall fell outward, and in a few minutes the inflammable interior had con-

sumed itself. Then they were able to see that no one was prisoner there.

"They have escaped," cried Rig Veda. "Now let's find them so they can be assured of friends and safety."

The crowds spread out over the side of the ridge shouting and yelling in the exuberant elation of the morning adventure.

Rig Veda climbed to a high point where he could have a wide surrounding view. Then he saw the culminating scene of their rescuing expedition. An automobile in the distance, containing a boy and a girl, was just going out of view. It was followed by another containing a man and a woman. As this machine was at that moment passing his point of observation, he could see the passengers clearly. The woman wore a red shawl and the man had on the broad hat of Val Hone.

He shouted at the top of his voice.

"The prisoners are escaping in an automobile and the villains are after them in another," cried Rig Veda. "Everybody who has a car come on."

Those near enough to hear, took up the shout. The signal whistles began to blow and the crowd converged at once toward the camp.

Rig Veda was the first to arrive. He sprang into the nearest automobile. By the time it was on the move, Roy Jones and his sister

climbed in. Mulford and Merrilee took the next and then the others came on in wild pursuit.

Pickup was not trying to make more than ordinary speed. Nugget had revived but he was still too weak and ill to sit up. He was lying in the rear seat with his head in Paquita's lap. Her quick ear suddenly caught the sound of an automobile following them. She looked around and saw hardly a hundred yards behind them the forms of their enemies. Both recognized the red shawl of Ogallalla Sue and the broad hat of Val Hone. Then they endeavored to get away, but Val Hone had selected a swifter machine and in a few moments he was alongside.

They recognized their late prisoners with a momentary panic of superstition. It was a decided shock to their nervous system to discover such a party in a car before them. They had been certain that two of these passengers were consumed in the burning building. They were indeed riding alongside some miraculously resurrected victims of the fiery furnace.

But superstitious fear rapidly vanished before more material interests. Val Hone made up his mind quickly. He had no time to deal with the two men but he could get some revenge by the easier task of taking the

girl. In a few words his plan was made. He swerved his machine around before the other and forced it to stop. With swift action, Ogallalla Sue sprang out into the road and seized the girl as she stood in defense over her father, who had again become unconscious. Val Hone threw the boy into the ditch and helped the woman get the struggling girl into his car. Just then they saw an automobile come swinging into view. Before they could get started, it had almost reached them. As it came by Pickup sprang aboard. Then it raced on. But the car with the captive was a speedier machine. It began to draw away rapidly from its pursuer.

Paquita saw that friends were coming. She felt that she must help. Her active observation was busy searching for some means to aid her friends. The suggestion what to do came when Ogallalla Sue leaned forward to hear something said by Val Hone. The Indian woman had a knife in her belt. Paquita gently extracted it and leaned out over the side. A quick dash of her arm and there was a fierce hissing sound at the rear wheel. The machine swerved to one side and Val Hone realized that a tire was gone. It left no time for any action but escape. He leaped from the machine and started for the shore of the bay which was now in sight among the lower

bluffs. Ogallalla Sue jumped out after him, and when Rig Veda arrived, they were making a desperate foot-race for a hiding place along the shore.

Rig Veda and Pickup felt that their job was not yet complete. The prisoners, so recently the victims of Ogallalla Sue and Val Hone, were determined to turn the tables on their enemies. They started off after the fugitives, leaving Paquita with her friends, who were coming on but a short distance away in a flying procession.

When the two pursuers reached the shore, they saw the objects of their pursuit running along the water's edge toward a boat in which a boy and an old man were fishing. Something that Val Hone said to the old fisherman caused him to lift the lines and row up in nearer speaking distance. Another sentence or two and the old man rowed up quite close. Then Val Hone made a dash out into the water. He seized the tiller of the skiff and whirled the boat around to him. With a swift jerk, he threw both boy and man out into the water and, stepping in, shoved the boat away from them. Ogallalla Sue came splashing out to him. He gave her a shove with the end of a paddle in her stomach and she sat down in the water. With another stroke he was away. Realizing that she was deserted, she shook

her fist at Val Hone and was soon endeavoring to escape along one of the ravines that ran out through the shore. When the two pursuers arrived at the scene of Val Hone's activities, the sputtering old man and crying

boy were unable to say anything, except by eloquent signs, and pointed helplessly at the man who was rapidly getting across the narrow arm of the bay to the thickly wooded shore.

Ogallalla Sue had become invisible. They ran after her to the top of the first ridge and

then decided that it would be useless for them to try to follow the fleet-footed Indian woman. Val Hone was the one they meant to get. They went back to the road and arrived there just in time to join the last of the procession that were escorting the reunited family to the Green Tree Hotel.

XXIII.

'ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

Molly's feelings and faith had been so suddenly and violently reversed toward both love and Fate that she was, as it were, thrown completely off of the track. Temporarily, at least, her car of progress was suddenly ditched. For policemen, detectives and newspaper reporters to have her love-note which she had so innocently written to one whom she believed to be hers by decree of Fate, and for them to be making a mystery out of it as a criminal document or black-hand plot, was enough to grieve a saint. When she found the advance guards of law and order maneuvering about her premises, she decamped to find more peaceful scenes. Molly made a "get-away" to free air by the most direct route. The first conveyance obtainable by which she could escape the zealous hunters, who were trailing her as a criminal, or an accomplice of criminals, was taken, and the curbstone chauffeur wheeled his machine away to the urgent commands, as she broke into the car: "Go! Yes, giddap! Go anywhere!"

Straight ahead was the open way to anywhere and the driver went that way as far as

he could go. But there was a rather undignified individual loafing about the hotel entrance who viewed Molly's hasty flight with alarm. He heard her excited orders to the chauffeur with regrets. Something was wrong with Molly. He was there to see that nothing bad should happen to a "leddy," especially to his friend, the "leddy" from his home farm. Once before he had saved her from a villain, who was trying to elope with her, by using the happy suggestion of getting on to the rear end of the machine, and riding with them to the first stop, where he could get at the schemer. He thought of that experience and made a dash to perform again the same feat, but the machine happened to have nothing on which he could lodge. The result was that he sat down heavily upon the road. Recent contact with smart events had sharpened his wits. Just as he was rising from his uncomfortable position, a motorcycle sheered around him. Necessity is the mother of suggestion as well as of action. Here was a method of locomotion arriving exactly on time. A swift jump for it and the astonished motorman found a passenger on the saddle behind him.

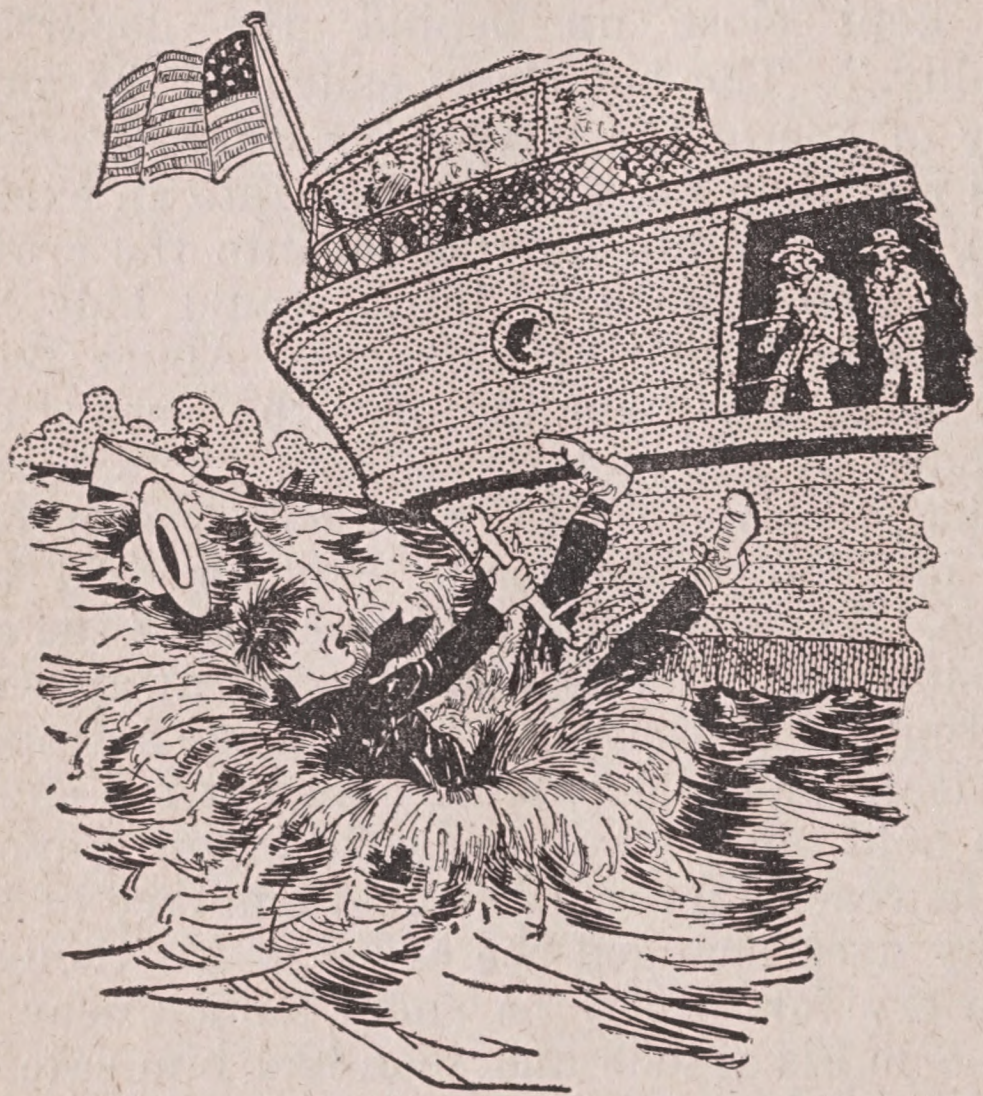
"Go for your life," cried the excited farmer in his ear. "There's a leddy from my home farm running away in that automobile yan-

der. Keep right up behind it all the way, and your money is in my pocket."

The motorman seemed to think that his passenger had him and he followed instructions. He kept close up behind the departing "leddy." The hot chase ended at the gateway of one of the ferry slips where a crowd was just then pressing its way into an excursion boat. Molly hurried on into the crowd which she seemed to think would hide her from her vindicitive pursuers. Abner Bean lost some time haggling over the reward demanded by the motorcycle man. The money he had received for the roan colt was becoming uncomfortably small. But he paid the price. When he arrived at the side of the excursion boat, it was just shoving away with its fugitive passenger. Abner made a desperate leap for the departing boat but fell short. His hold on the railing broke before anyone could reach him and the cold embrace of the briny deep changed the ardor of his thought to a cry for safety. A small launch near by came to his rescue and soon had him safe on board. A hurried discussion ensued between the wet man and the launch man. The wet man's arguments prevailed, for the launch set out in the wake of the excursion boat.

The excursion crowd was an outing party of pleasure-seekers landing at a point around

beyond Sausalito. On arriving there the boat emptied out its passengers as if they were the contents of a big scoop-shovel. The gay crowd streamed away together but Molly hastened



onward along the beach to get as far away as possible from the agents of civilization.

Abner landed soon after and lost much time in following the crowd. He had made a suitable exchange with the launch man for dry clothes and the bargain had considerably

improved his appearance. Nevertheless, the friendly attitude of the crowd brought no consolation to Abner. The "leddy" he sought was not there. Someone gave him a clew and he was away after her along the shore.

Meanwhile, Molly had quite definitely thought out her method of escaping from the desperate charges which her unlucky note to Val Hone had brought upon her. She would find a farm house where she could get her railroad ticket from Uncle Jeremiah and take the first train that would return her to the paradise back on the farm. She now loved every chicken, pig and cow on the farm. She thought of Abner. There was a fleeting feeling that maybe she even loved him. In the midst of these thoughts, a farm house that seemed to be just the right thing caught her eye. She decided to go over and see if she could not stay there for a week. She turned that way eager with the relief of final rest for the weary from worry.

But half way up the long slope brought a frightful disappointment. Evidently a wireless message had been received there and they were lying in wait for her. Two men in uniform came around from behind the house, marching straight toward her with guns on their shoulders. She a lone woman! And yet undoubtedly they had been ordered to shoot

or they would not be coming to capture her with guns on their shoulders. Oh, that only Abner were near to defend her. She now realized how wrongly she had mistreated that devoted soul. In a moment she got control enough of her feet to turn them around, and

then she showed what a scared woman can do in the way of sprinting for the lead. She went over the near hill top like a goat.

Exhausted and out of breath she sank down upon a mat of grass in the side of a ravine

near the shore, and closed her eyes to thank Providence for so benevolently giving her strength and speed to escape the dreaded fangs of the law.

She was feeling quite well rested and was pondering over the problem of what to do next, when she heard a crunching sound out on the shore. It sounded like the landing of a boat. Was it possible that a warship had been sent after her! She started up in alarm and looked out through the mouth of the ravine to discover what new terror was to assail her. But the narrow view presented only a clear streak of the peaceful bay. Then a man appeared in view. It was not the dreaded soldier, but the still worse form of Val Hone. He was too busy watching some one else up the shore to be noticing any one in so unexpected a place as up in the ravine. She did not wait to think out possibilities. To get away in the opposite direction was her immediate ambition. If the soldiers were to see her there near that man, it would be such proof of partnership in guilt with him that she need never hope pardon, even if she ever escaped alive. She fled up the dry bed of the pebbly ravine till it came out shallow between low banks in the side of the sloping plane. There she sat down to take breath when she saw the figure of Val Hone coming after her.

How she wished this was good Fate managing things rather than bad Fate. But the wish was only a fleeting breath of better days. The evil was upon her. The soldiers would find them and she would never again see the chickens, or pigs, or Ab.

"Go away!" she cried, as he came up near her. "Go away! I don't want you. It's a lie. The gypsy was a devil. You are not my Fate. Go away!"

But Val Hone had no idea of going away, till he had at least satisfied his curiosity. He came up to her as she stopped, too frightened and out of breath to move.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, "here is the little old dried up imp that has been dogging my steps like a nightmare."

As he was speaking, Molly saw a glorious sight. It was Abner Bean coming up the gulch. She did not betray her joy but it gave her spunk. Abner had at last appeared when she needed him. But the uncomplimentary words so viciously spoken from one she had admired so much stung away her fear into a fighting attitude.

"You old probate and unwhipped terminal," she cried, shaking her finger in his face. "If you touch me, I'll scream and bring the soldiers I see coming over there."

She pointed in the direction opposite to the

one from which Ab was stealthily approaching him, now almost near enough to make a jump for him.

Val Hone raised on his toes to look where she was pointing, when a head struck him in

the back like a ten ton billy goat. He went to earth on his stomach bent back like the letter U. Molly gave a shout of joy.

"Still follerin' and insultin' this leddy," cried the assailant as he turned the breathless man over on his back and sat down astride of his stomach, holding forth the man's wrists

rigid at arm's length above the captive's head.

Molly ran to the top of the near bank and yelled. The two soldiers heard her and turned to look. She motioned them to come to her. They came on the run. She forgot to be afraid of them until they started away with the prisoner weakly limping between them, with all the fight knocked out of him. Then Molly thought about the wireless message the soldiers had received to capture her. Maybe they didn't get it. Anyway she decided not to mention it if they didn't. Besides, perfect love casteth out fear. She had a defender. She clung so close to Ab that he became encouraged enough to get his arm around her. She seemed to like it and he became abnormally encouraged. At the fort, he asked one of the soldiers who put Val Hone into the guard house, if there was anyone around there who could do the marrying act for a feller and his girl. The guard could tell him where to go in order to do that very thing if he had a paper license to be married.

"Get a marriage license?" he said, astonished at any person thinking he had such a lack of foresight. "Why, man, the first thing I did when I got to San Frisky was to hunt out and get that very needs-cesity. I knew I'd

have to marry that girl before I got out of the town."

Molly had come up in time to hear him make the last remark. She looked up at him fondly.

"Oh me! Oh my!" she exclaimed in rapture. "I didn't know 'fore this that Abner Bean was a clairvoyant. Shore enough he can beat Fate. He knowed it all the time."

Ab looked wise.

About two hours later the newly wedded pair, happy as spring lambs in a meadow, just after nightfall arrived at the Green Tree Hotel and inquired for Uncle Jeremiah. They were taken to a private dining room where an evening dinner party was in progress. Rig Veda was about to propose a toast to the reunited family of Uncle Jeremiah when Abner and Molly appeared in the scene. Molly whispered something to Uncle Jeremiah that Abner was too bashful to tell. Places were made for them at the table. Uncle Jeremiah announced what had happened and there was appreciative applause. The toast was drunk to the happy pair, with a characteristic speech by Rig Veda. Then Uncle Jeremiah had something else to announce and that was the engagement of Captain Mulford and Merrilee. Another toast was drunk to another eloquent speech by the toastmaster, Rig Veda.

"One more," said Rig Veda, "and then I

have nothing more to add but a certain invitation. I want to drink a toast to the hero and heroine of this lively experience we have been recently having as a stirring variation in the music of living. I drink to the courage and loyalty of Pickup and Paquita. Long may they live to develop and use the splendid energy, beauty and benevolence of their youth."

"And now," continued Rig Veda, when this had been done, "I want you all, tomorrow afternoon at three o'clock, to meet me at the pier in the yacht harbor in the Fair grounds to be my guests for a cruise, as long as you may find it convenient, anywhere along the coast, in my yacht, which has just arrived through the Golden Gate, after its passage from New York, through the Panama Canal, on a journey around the world."

Uncle Jeremiah and his interesting family went on board their friend's yacht at the appointed time, and the last "San Frisky" saw of them that season was as they all stood together looking out over the beautiful Exposition and glorious bay, on their way out through the brilliant sheen of the Golden Gate, into the tender mercies of the great Pacific.

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